"IT WAS A QUAINT, OLD-TIME FORMAL THING THAT GRANNY AND MARJORY DANCED." *(See page 73.)*

MARJORY AT THE WILLOWS

By

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ILLUSTRATED

By

JOHN GOSS

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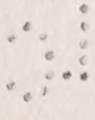

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Marjory at the Willows

CHAPTER I

AN APPLE-BLOSSOM WEDDING

MARJORY smiled across at Lissy, all pink and white, a bunch of apple-blossoms held firmly in one hand. Lissy smiled back. Marjory was all pink and white, too. She held her bouquet daintily. Both little bridesmaids smiled at the bride. Miss Doris was sweet as an apple-bloom herself. Brother John Penny stood beside her. Before them, was the minister, who was Miss Doris's own father, saying something very sweet and solemn.

Near by, was the Uncle who had given

Miss Doris away. With him, was a bunch of her friends—her mother, an aunt or two, and any number of cousins and school-chums. In the background were Aunt Melissa Penny, Marjory's father, Lissy's father, and the three Penny boys, scrubbed and polished till they shone. Trixy, the smallest of the Pennys, stood close to the bride. She looked important, and just a little anxious. For didn't she hold, in its nest of apple-blooms, the ring that was going on the bride's finger?

For a whole year, Marjory and Lissy had looked forward to this day—the wedding-day of Brother John and Doris Dean, their little school-teacher. "It must be in apple-blossom time," Miss Doris had said.

And when Lissy and Marjory and the rest of John's family had come, the night before, 'way up into the hills where Miss

Doris lived, they had traveled through miles and miles of apple-blossoms. They had found Miss Doris's home set right down in a perfect bower of rosy bloom. There had been no need to lay rugs or raise arches for the wedding. The grass had spread a carpet, soft as velvet, and dotted with dandelions. The trees raised beautiful arches all the way through the yard, straight to the oldest one of them all, under which stood the bridal party. The air was warm and sweet. At every breath, pink petals drifted down. Birds twittered and sang and built their nests.

John was slipping the ring on Doris's hand now. She smiled up at him. There was a prayer, beautiful and hushed, out there in the old orchard. Then, every one was laughing and shaking hands with John and kissing Miss Doris. Only she wasn't

Miss Doris any more, but Mrs. John Penny.

An hour later, the bride had gone showered with petals, her cheeks pink as the pinkest one of all. The two little bridesmaids were upstairs getting ready for the long ride back home. From a room across the hall, came sounds from the other little Pennys also getting ready.

"Sister Doris," said Lissy, softly trying the new name. "Wasn't it the loveliest wedding?" she went on. She sank down on the floor in a tired, happy little heap to take off her strap-slippers. The strap-slippers were tired, too. Of course they were very new and very shiny, as bridesmaid's slippers should be. And since early morning they had been on the feet of a very busy little bridesmaid.

"It's lovely to be a bridesmaid," said Marjory. She was taking off strap-slip-

pers, too. But while Lissy Penny took off each little shoe carefully, and polished anxiously at what might be a tiny scratch on the toe of one, Marjory Brook kicked hers off carelessly. It was the very first pair of strap-slippers Lissy Penny had ever owned. And Marjory Brook couldn't remember the time she hadn't owned several pairs. "I've always wanted to be one," went on Marjory, pulling off her big pink hair-bow to put on a black one. "And I do think it was sweet of sister Doris to ask me. Of course, she'd want you, but to want me, too!"

"I'd like to know why she wouldn't want you, too," said Lissy, slipping into her everyday shoes with a sigh of content. "You're every bit as much John's sister as I am."

"I know it," cried Marjory, joyfully.

"But even after a whole year of knowing that I am, I just can't get used to it. Just think, Lissy, if you'd supposed you were the only one in your family all your life, and then suddenly found out that you had a whole brother John and a whole sister Lissy, and a half brother Bob and a half brother Bert and a half brother Pet and a half sister Trixy, and had really had 'em forever almost and just hadn't known it, would you ever get used to it?"

"Isn't it the splendid-est?" laughed Lissy. She took off her big hair-bow, folded it neatly, and tucked it away in a small wooden box with a quaint carved cover.

"If you aren't the greatest girl, Lissy Penny!" cried Marjory. "Did you bring that little old box just to put your hair-bow in?"

Lissy flushed a little.

"I always want to take that box, Margie," she said. "I know it's silly, and probably it doesn't look a bit pretty to any one but just me. But I've always had it, you see, ever since I can remember. I just can't bear to leave it alone there on the table."

"How funny," laughed Marjory. "You take such good care of all your things, Lissy."

"I know it," said Lissy. "But, you see, I've never had many nice things to take care of—and you've always had everything. You are the most like a story-book girl, Margie. First, you came to my father and mother—my very own father and mother—and then, while you were just a baby, Mr. Brook adopted you and neither he nor father ever said a word—"

"And all that year I lived at Overbrook and we never dreamed we were really sis-

ters," cried Marjory, when Lissy paused out of breath.

"Till finally they told us all about it," chimed in Lissy. "And we do look a little bit alike, although father says I'm more a Penny every day, like him, and you are a Beach like mother."

Both little girls had to drop everything here just long enough to glance in the mirror and see if they still did look alike. Their faces were shaped alike, but Lissy's was plumper and pinker. Their hair grew alike and waved alike, but Lissy's was getting a dark red-brown, while Marjory's was staying golden. Lissy's eyes were gray and twinkly. Marjory's were dark and serious. And Lissy was much taller.

"I'm always going to be little," cried Marjory with a flounce. "I don't see why I can't be tall like you, Lissy."

These two little girls were never tired of talking about how they had known each other several months before they had known that they were really sisters. Marjory's own mother, who was Lissy's too, had died when Marjory was born. Marjory had been adopted by the Brooks'—wealthy people who brought her up as their own child. Mrs. Brook had died when Marjory was five. And just before she was eleven, her father had sent her to live at Overbrook near The Penny Bank, where Lissy lived with her little step-brothers and sister.

"And Daddy wanted to adopt you, too, Lissy," Marjory said a little later, as they finished packing.

"I couldn't be," said Lissy. "I couldn't leave the dear old Penny Bank and father and the little Pennys. How could I, Margie?"

"Well, it's come out pretty well," said Marjory. "Only I would like to have you always with me, Lissy. It was dreadfully lonely in New York, last winter, without you. But isn't it lovely that Papa Penny has that fine position in Daddy's business? And Brother John, too?"

"Don't tell," said Lissy. "But Sister Doris has asked me to New York this summer to help settle their flat. That was what she whispered to me just before she went downstairs. Isn't it the splendidest?"

"I don't know what I'm going to do this summer, yet," said Marjory. "You see, Daddy's got to go abroad to look after the foreign side of his business he says. I wish there wasn't any foreign side. I don't like to have Daddy go so far away."

"You'll have Papa Penny left," said Lissy,

comfortingly. "Isn't it lovely to have two fathers?"

By this time, Lissy had slipped into what she called her best gown. And Marjory had slipped into one of her many best ones. Between them, they'd packed the suitcase. Lissy's things went in neatly. Marjory wasn't used to packing, but she managed with a little of Lissy's help. Since she had known the Pennys Marjory had learned to do many things for herself.

Downstairs they went, the suitcase bumping along between them. Faded blossoms lay on the stairs, trailed away across the hall, out of the front door, across the porch, and down the steps, marking the happy footsteps of the bride.

On the porch were all the Pennys and most of the Dean relatives. Miss Doris's relatives were trying to persuade the Pen-

nys to stay over another night. Mr. Brook was explaining that business couldn't wait long, even for weddings. And the big Brook car was standing before the porch.

It just held them. Mr. Brook drove and Papa Penny sat with him. Aunt Melissa and the four little Pennys filled the back seat. And Marjory and Lissy each had a chair.

The sunset clouds must have been told about the apple-blossom wedding. They wore just the right shade of pink. At the first star that trembled out—just a silver speck in the sky—all the Pennys set up a shout, and, fingers on lips, made a wish on it for John and Doris. The car flew on and on between quiet meadows and pastures. By and by, it went through a little town, where lights sparkled like bright eyes.

Then they came to another, that was like

a child sitting up late. A city came next that to Marjory seemed to try to keep from nodding. The next one was sound asleep and dreaming. She fixed her eyes on a great star. The first she knew the car dashed along one of its silver rays, straight into it, toward a house built all of apple-blooms.

"Oh," she cried, as the car came to a stop. "Did you bring your box, Lissy?"

"It's in the suitcase," said Lissy briskly.

"Why, it's The Penny Bank," said Marjory, rubbing her eyes. "I thought we were in that star, Lissy, and you had your old box just full of little bits of stars."

Lissy laughed. She was bustling about helping to unload all the little Pennys.

"You've been asleep," she said. "Oh, aren't you glad to get home? The Penny Bank's always so glad to see us."

Marjory was to stay all night at The Penny Bank, as she often did. Daddy and Papa Penny would go back to the city at daybreak. So she kissed Daddy good night. And he went on in the car to Overbrook, her own big country home farther up the hill.

Up the steep stairs to bed, the little girls stumbled. Lissy took time to shake out all the bridesmaid finery. But she tumbled into bed with Marjory as soon as that was done. Almost in a wink, or so it seemed, it was morning.

When they came downstairs, Aunt Melissa was already rolling out cookies.

"Take your breakfast out on the back porch," she said. "There's milk in the cooler, Lissy, and rolls and strawberries. These cookies will be ready by the time you are."

Out on the porch, the sunshine was warm and the air sweet. Birds trilled the happiest things in the tall old elms.

"It's 'most like birthday weather," laughed Marjory.

"Isn't it nice ours both come in June?" said Lissy, drawing up chairs to the little table behind the morning-glory vines. "What a good time we had last year!"

"If they were farther apart there'd be two parties instead of one," said Marjory.

"I like them better together," cried Lissy.

"You're a whole day younger than I am," teased Marjory.

"If I wasn't two years older to start off with," laughed Lissy.

"It won't be so nice this year," said Marjory, "'cause Daddy'll be gone."

"I'll probably be at Sister Doris's," said

Lissy, pouring out the milk. "Why don't you stay in the city, too, Margie?"

"Daddy won't let me," said Marjory. "He thinks I'm not old enough yet to stay in that big house unless he's there, too. Not even with Mrs. Brown and Annette."

"He's lost you once," said Lissy. "That's why he's so careful of you. If only John's house was bigger. But it's just a little flat, Doris says. She says the room where I'm to sleep is like a little closet."

"Daddy'd never let me stay in the city, anyway, unless he was there," said Marjory.

"Never mind," said Lissy. "I'll write you every day. I'll be busy—there's a good deal of work about settling a flat, I suppose. But I'll be back by the first of August. I couldn't go at all, if Papa Penny wasn't in the city. I'm always homesick away from The Penny Bank."

Just here, Aunt Melissa came to the door with a plate of crisp, sugary cookies.

"Here's a letter for you, Lissy," she said. "It must have come yesterday while we were away."

CHAPTER II

MARJORY'S PLAN

IT was an interesting looking letter. Its gray envelope was addressed in a clear firm hand to

"Miss M. Penny,
Brookside."

"Miss M. Penny?" cried Lissy. "How funny it sounds,—as if I was all grown up and done with it. Who can it be from?"

"Open it, child, and find out," said Aunt Melissa. She set the plate of cookies on the table.

Lissy opened the letter carefully. She drew out a sheet of fine gray paper, that smelled of some faint perfume.

"My dear Granddaughter," she began.

"Have I a Grandmother?" she cried, forgetting to read any more in her surprise.

"Your mother's mother," cried Aunt Melissa. She was almost as much excited as Lissy. "Do go on, Lissy. There's never been a word from them since your mother married Peter Penny. He wasn't good enough for them."

"My father wasn't good enough for them?" said Lissy slowly. Her cheeks flamed scarlet. She dropped the letter. Marjory just saved it from the milk pitcher. "Then—I don't want to read the letter, Aunt Melissa."

"Of course, he was good enough," said Aunt Melissa, sorry for her thoughtless words. "But it was a wealthy old family, dear, and he wasn't rich enough. Do read the letter."

Slowly Lissy took the letter from Marjory's hand.

"Since your mother's death, I have known nothing about you," she read. "But in yesterday's paper, I read that my grandson, John, is to be married, that you are to be bridesmaid, and that you now live in the old Brookside home that was Brother Solomon's. I am getting to be an old woman, and I want to know my granddaughter. Come to me for the summer. We live in a fine old house near the mountains, and I'm sure you'll have a pleasant time. Write me just when to expect you, and let it be soon after June First.

"Affectionately,

"YOUR GRANDMOTHER."

Below was an address:

"Mrs. Margaret Beach,
The Willows,
Glenmore."

And, below that, were clear directions for

traveling from Brookside to Glenmore by train.

Lissy's voice, reading the letter, didn't sound a bit like Lissy's. At the end, she clutched Aunt Melissa.

"Does she mean—me?" she cried.

"Of course," said Aunt Melissa. She took the letter to read it slowly for herself.

"But I needn't go, need I?" cried Lissy. "Oh, Aunt Melissa, do hurry and say I needn't go to this Grandmother's?"

"I don't know," said Aunt Melissa, still reading. "Why, of course, child, no one shall make you go. But don't you want to know these new relatives of yours—your own mother's people, dear?"

Lissy shook her head. Marjory had never seen her sunny little face so unhappy.

"I—just—can't," she said. "I'm always homesick if I go away alone. You

know I am, Aunt Melissa. And 'way off there. Besides, I've promised Doris to help settle the flat. She says, herself, she can't get along without me. Oh, I just can't go!"

"Well, well, dear," said Aunt Melissa, still studying the letter. "Wait till Peter Penny comes home to-night. She was a proud, handsome woman—this Grandma Beach, Lissy. And she can't be very old —not over sixty-five."

"That seems dreadfully old," said Marjory. "And, of course, Lissy can't go 'way off there and stay all summer. Don't think about it, Lissy."

But all that warm May day, whatever Lissy did, over and over she said to herself, "I just can't go."

When father came at supper-time, he read the letter slowly. Then quite as if she had

been little Trixy, he drew Lissy into his arms.

"You couldn't go, could you, my girl?" he asked gravely. There was something in his voice and eyes that told Lissy how much he wanted her to go.

"Oh, father," she cried, "how could I? I'll be homesick, and Doris needs me, and Grandma didn't send you her love—or—or anything. She doesn't sound loving. Don't make me go, father."

"No one shall make you go, Lissy," said father. "But listen. Your mother wasn't nineteen when she married me. And I was too poor to make her comfortable as she had always been. Her people couldn't forgive us. Now, all her life, dear, your mother hoped that some day everything would be made right. When John came, she wrote them. They didn't answer.

When you came, she wrote again, and they didn't answer. But always, she watched for a chance to make up with them. One of the last things she asked me was that if ever that chance came, I would do my part. When she died, I wrote them, but there was still no answer. This is the first letter in all these years, Lissy. It looks like the chance your mother wanted."

Lissy's face was very sober.

"Think it over a little longer," said father. "Then if you really can't go, I'll write your grandmother and perhaps some other plan can be made. We might all go to see her in the car. Margie, too—Margie is just as much her granddaughter as you are."

"Oh, am I?" cried Marjory.

"She never knew about you, dear," said Papa Penny, drawing the other little girl to

him. "I gave you to Mr. Brook, you know."

Through the best kind of a strawberry shortcake supper, Marjory was almost as quiet as Lissy. Washing and drying the dishes in the old kitchen, neither little girl said a word. But once when a great tear splashed off Lissy's nose into the dish-pan, Marjory hugged her, wiping towel, plate she was wiping, and all.

When the dishes were done, Marjory started for home. Lissy didn't walk part way, as usual.

"I've got to think things out," she said.

Marjory had some thinking of her own to do. Late as it was when the car left Daddy on the porch for his over-Sunday visit, Marjory was there waiting for him.

"Up yet, Margie?" he cried.

"Come into the library, Daddy," she said.

"I've something very important to talk over."

Daddy sat down in his big chair. Marjory perched herself on its arm.

"Out with it, my lady," said Daddy.

"Lissy is in awful trouble," said Marjory, soberly.

"Lissy—in trouble?"

"Yes, Daddy."

Then Marjory began somewhere in the middle of things and told, as well as she could, about Lissy's new grandmother who didn't like Lissy's father, but wanted Lissy, and how Lissy just couldn't go. After some questions, Daddy understood just how serious it all was for Lissy.

"She won't really have to go, will she?" he said.

"That's what I thought," said Marjory. "But Papa Penny does so want things

all made up. And he's sure Lissy can help make them up, don't you see, much better than he can? So Lissy doesn't know what to do. And that's where I come in."

"You, Margie-girl?"

"Papa Penny says I'm just as much Grandma Beach's granddaughter as Lissy is —just exactly. And so, Daddy—why can't I go, instead of Lissy?"

For a long minute, Daddy didn't say anything.

"Would you really be willing to do that, dear?" he asked at last.

"For Lissy, I would," said Marjory. "And, besides, Daddy, you don't know how lovely it seems to me to think that I have a grandma all my own. Grandmas in storybooks are the dearest things. I've always wanted one. Don't you see?"

Daddy nodded. He was thinking. After a minute, he said.

"So, Margie, if I find that this place would be a good one for you to spend the summer in with this new grandmother, you will really be willing to go with Annette and stay there?"

"You won't be here, anyway, Daddy," cried Marjory. "And that's one thing makes it easier to go away myself. And Lissy is going to Doris and John. But, Daddy Brook," she added seriously, taking his face between her hands, as she often did, "there's one thing I just can't do. I can't take Annette along. I'm almost thirteen years old. And I do want to be just as much like Lissy as I possibly can. What would this Grandma Beach think if I came with a maid?"

"How do you propose to get there?"

laughed Daddy; "are you going to travel alone?"

"You can take me part way in the car, or some way," said Marjory.

"Of course that part can be arranged," said Daddy, "if everything else can. I'll talk it over with Penny."

"And you don't think Grandma Beach would mind so very much having me instead of Lissy?" asked Marjory anxiously. "I can't be as good a granddaughter, maybe, but I'll do my best. I'd just love to be somebody's granddaughter come a-visiting, Daddy. It sounds so sort of grown-up and important."

Marjory had slipped from the chair-arm, now, and was walking airily about the room, her head very high.

"I don't see how she could mind—much," laughed Daddy, "when she's never

seen either of you. But off to bed, now, we'll see about it to-morrow."

Next day, the two fathers had a long, long talk about Marjory's plan.

"Marjory has never asked to do a thing like this before," said Marjory's father. "It shows how she is changing—learning to think of some one beside herself. Something the Pennys and The Penny Bank have taught her. I don't like to say no."

"And I don't like to force Lissy to go," said Lissy's father. "It's the first time she has ever shown unwillingness to do anything like this. She is a homesick little thing away from us all—always was. Now, Marjory's plan strikes me as a first rate one. To begin with, she's just like her mother. And I think she's the kind of granddaughter Grandmother Beach expects. She can help make up things be-

tween us, just as well as Lissy can—maybe better. With some help from us, why not let the children do this in their own way?"

The little folks didn't hear this talk between the fathers. What they heard came later in the lovely long twilight of that May Sunday.

Marjory, Lissy, and Aunt Melissa were on the porch. Bob, Bert, Pet, and Trixy were making dandelion chains. When the two fathers came out from their long talk in The Penny Bank, Marjory flashed a quick look at them. Both nodded and smiled.

But before any one else could say anything, Lissy came toward her father.

"I'll go, father," she said. "It isn't right not to let Grandmother have a granddaughter, I suppose, now she wants one. But if I'm too homesick, I needn't stay all summer,

need I? Can't I come home in a month?"

As Lissy said "month," it sounded like a whole year at the very least.

"Marjory has something to tell you, Lissy," said Mr. Brook.

"Oh, Lissy," cried Marjory, dancing up to her, "you aren't going to Grandma Beach's! But—I—am!"

"You?" cried Lissy, staring at Marjory's eager face. "How can you go?"

"I can—and I am," said Marjory, dancing about. "When both fathers say I can, I can, and that's all there is to it. They're going to arrange everything. All Grandma Beach wants is a granddaughter. Well, I'm that just as exactly as much as you are. And she can make up through me just as fast as she can through you. I'm just wild to be a granddaughter, Lissy Penny. So, I'm going—I'm going—I'm going!"

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE OF THE GRANDMOTHERS

MARJORY sat up stiff and straight, one hand grasping the handle of her little new umbrella. She wanted to look just as much like a granddaughter going to visit her grandmother as possible. The train rumbled along, taking its own time, and stopping at nearly every station to rest awhile.

Daddy had brought Marjory a long, long way in the car. Then he had left her at a bleak little station. Marjory didn't like to think of how long it would be before she could see Daddy again, nor of how far away he was going.

Well, she was doing something for Lissy.

Lissy was so happy to think she needn't go. It would have been harder for Lissy. Lissy didn't want to be a granddaughter. And down in Marjory's little heart was a love for going to new places and doing new things that Lissy didn't have.

Marjory tried to make believe that she was really traveling alone. But in the seat just back of her was a big man, called Ben Baker. Daddy had put her in Ben Baker's charge, telling him to keep both eyes on her till she was safe at Grandma Beach's. He was doing just that. For whenever Marjory turned to look at him, she found his keen, kind eyes smiling straight at her. Marjory liked his face. It was jolly and young in spite of its wrinkles.

By and by, he leaned over the seat to speak to her.

"You know Nancy Spindle?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," cried Marjory. "And Joe and Betty and the Martie Twins. Do you know them, too,—and Fritz?"

"I rather think so," said the man. "All those young folks call me 'Uncle Ben.' One of the Marties, if not both, almost belongs to me. They're all coming to visit me at White Birch Camp this summer."

"White Birch Camp?" cried Marjory. "Why, that's in the story Nancy Spindle tells about Martin's getting lost and found, isn't it? Is it anywhere near my Grandma Beach's?"

"Not near, exactly," said Uncle Ben. "There's a long line of mountains, little girl. White Birch Camp is 'way the other side of your home at Brookside, and Glenmore, where Grandma Beach lives, is 'way this side."

"I'm sorry," said Marjory. "I thought

how nice it would be to see you all this summer."

"Maybe we can manage that," said Uncle Ben. "I have a great red car that Betty calls 'The Crimson Rambler,' and it can go 'most anywhere. I wouldn't wonder now, if before summer's over, we all called upon you."

Then Uncle Ben began to tell Marjory something about Glenmore.

"It's just a make-believe village," he said, "like most of these little towns on the edge of the mountains. There's a store and a post-office, and a big hotel, called 'The Pines,' some nice homes, and woods all around. Just the place for a little girl like you to stay all summer in. You'll get as fat as Martha. The girl-twin, you know —she's a regular roly-poly."

Marjory wasn't sure she wanted to be as

fat as the roly-poly Martha. But she nodded politely. She was interested, now, in what seemed to be the beginnings of a good-sized town.

"This is Ridgewood," said Uncle Ben. "Here's where we leave the train for the stage."

All the way from Ridgewood to Glenmore, the old stage-wagon rattled along a sandy road. Marjory bounced up and down on the worn leather seat, and clutched the arm to hold herself in. She felt excited and grown-up—just the way a granddaughter going to visit her grandmother ought to feel.

It was a charming road. It went out of the pretty town of Ridgewood with a great flourish across a bridge much too big for the stream under it. Then it wound along between broad, beautiful farms. By and

by, the road met the river. The river was so glad to see it, no wonder the road had hurried every minute to get there. It kept close to the river, after that, never for a minute losing sight of it. They seemed the best of friends—the sandy road and the sparkling river. The river was going one way, and Marjory in the old stage, the other. Uncle Ben said the river was on its way from some big pulp mills below Ridgewood to some others above it.

"It has nothing to do here except look pretty and have a good time," he laughed. "And it goes right by The Willows where your Grandmother lives. I expect you and the river will be good friends before summer's over."

"You haven't told me its name," said Marjory. Already she loved the quiet little stream sparkling a welcome to

her through its fringe of alders and willows.

"The Indians called it Ka-hu-ah-go," said Uncle Ben. "We call it plain Black River."

"Blue River would be prettier, I think," said Marjory. "Do you know Grandma Beach, Uncle Ben?" she added.

"When you know me as well as my bunch does," said Uncle Ben, "you'll know I know almost every one in all this country. I've known your Grandma Beach since I was a little boy."

"Do you think I'll make a good granddaughter?" asked Marjory, anxiously. "I've never tried being one, you know."

"You'd suit me all right," said Uncle Ben, his eyes twinkling.

"I do hope I'll do as well as Lissy," said Marjory.

She didn't have much time to think about that then. Just here, the road turned sharply, went up a little rise, and across the river on a long high bridge. The sun was just setting. The river was bright with sunset color. The road swept with a great curve down from the bridge.

But the stage didn't follow it. It turned into a broad green yard shaded by tall trees. Back among the trees was a large white house with green blinds. Its western windows blazed in the sun. The door on one of the porches was open. Some one stood at the top of the steps. As the stage stopped, she hurried down toward it. She was a strong, pleasant-faced woman with smiling brown eyes.

"Is this Miss Margaret?" she said.

"It's the little lady, herself," said Uncle Ben, lifting Marjory down. "Her father

wanted me to leave her right at this very door."

"We're all expecting her," said the woman. She took Marjory's umbrella and bag in one hand, and Marjory's hand in the other.

"Are you Grandma Beach?" asked Marjory eagerly.

"Oh, no, indeed, Miss Margaret," said the woman. "I'm the housekeeper, Celia Dense. This is your grandmother."

Marjory, looking up, saw a tall woman waiting at the top of the steps. She had smooth dark hair and dark eyes. Her voice was brisk and businesslike—not a bit like the story-book's Grandmother's.

"Welcome, Margaret," she said. She kissed Marjory's cheek. Then she held her off a little to look at her.

"How very small you are," she said.

Marjory tried to say her name was Marjory, not Margaret. But somehow she didn't say anything. For there, waiting to speak to her, was another tall, dark lady. She carried a little trumpet in one hand, which, as she spoke, she put to her ear.

"Welcome, grand-niece Margaret," she said.

Then, just as Marjory was feeling very little and strange indeed, between these tall, stately, new relatives, out of the door came a tiny woman. Her hair was soft and silvery and full of waves. Her eyes were dark and bright, and how they danced at sight of Marjory.

"Little great-granddaughter Margaret," she cried. She put both arms about Marjory and gave her a hug just like a story-book grandmother, with a kiss to match.

"'WHY, HOW MANY ARE THERE?' CRIED MARJORY, HOLDING FAST TO THE BIT OF A HAND."

And she wouldn't let go of her. She held her close and gave her a quick little squeeze now and then.

"Why, how many are there?" cried Marjory, holding fast to the bit of a hand. "Daddy didn't say there were so many grandmothers."

"I am your Grandmother Beach, Margaret," said the first tall old lady, briskly. "This is my sister Eunice." She bowed slightly toward the other tall old lady with the ear-trumpet. "She was your mother's aunt, so she is your great-aunt. She's very deaf—speak into her ear-trumpet if you want her to hear you."

There didn't seem to be anything to say into the ear-trumpet just then. And Grandma Beach went on, turning to the little old lady:

"This is my mother—your mother's

grandmother—and your own great-grandmother."

"Oh, oh," cried Marjory, her eyes big and shining. "A whole grandmother and a whole great-aunt and a whole great-grandmother all my very own. A whole houseful of grandmothers. Isn't it wonderful, Uncle Ben?"

She turned to Uncle Ben who was waiting to say good-by.

"Guess you'll be well looked after," he said. "Good-by, my dear. Have a pleasant summer."

"You were very kind to bring me, Uncle Ben," said Marjory. She held out her hand. "Do come to see us—all of you."

"We shall be pleased to see you any time, Ben," said Grandma Beach in her stately way. Aunt Eunice nodded. And little great-grandmother nodded, too, in the most

delightful fashion like some lovely little doll.

The old stage rumbled away, with Uncle Ben waving his hand and smiling at Marjory in the midst of her grandmothers.

It disappeared around a bend, just as Celia Dense bustled out of the door.

"Supper's all ready," she said.

As she took off Marjory's hat and coat in the living-room, she said, "Call me 'Celia,' Miss Margaret. Your mother and I were girls together."

The dining-room was quaint and low, with one door opening on the porch and the other into the living-room. It had a big fireplace opposite the porch-door. All the furniture was quaint and old. So was the silver and china and linen of the pretty, round supper-table.

The meal wasn't like any Marjory

had known before. There were delicious things to eat. Celia served them. But it wasn't all laughter and chatter like the suppers in The Penny Bank. And it wasn't like dinners with Daddy either, just they two alone, when she poured his coffee and put in the lumps of sugar.

For half a minute, maybe, a lump that wasn't sugary, got in Marjory's throat in the way of the biscuits and wild strawberries and cream. She swallowed hard. She wasn't going to be homesick.

"Did you have a pleasant journey, Margaret?" asked Grandma Beach.

"My name isn't Margaret, please," said Marjory.

Grandma Beach didn't seem to hear, so Marjory said it again a little louder.

"We know you were given an outlandish name," Grandma Beach said then. "It

came from the Penny side of the house. We shall call you Margaret. My mother's name is Margaret. Mine is Margaret. Your mother's name was Margaret. Yours should have been. Did you have a pleasant journey, Margaret?"

"But I'm not Melissa," said honest little Marjory. She wanted everything straight at once.

"Of course not," said Grandma, who heard only a word or two. "You prefer your rightful name, as any of the Beaches would. You are all Beach—not a bit of Penny in you, I'm glad to see. Did you have a pleasant journey, Margaret?"

Marjory gave Celia an appealing glance. She passed her some little round cakes that looked ready to melt in your mouth.

"Never mind," she said softly. "Grandma Beach doesn't always hear very

well—let her have things her own way."

"Yes, Grandma Beach," said Marjory in answer to Grandma's question. She didn't say any more. She saw quickly that at this table she wasn't expected to talk unless she was asked something. She munched the little cake, with its icing of maple-sugar, and tried to remember what she had written Grandma Beach about coming.

> "If you are willing," she had said, "I am coming to spend the summer with you. I hope you will like me. I will try to be a good granddaughter.
>
> "With love,
>
> "MARJORY."

Then she had liked the looks of that word "Granddaughter" so much, that she erased "Marjory" and signed the new name to the letter, instead. Daddy and Aunt Melissa and Papa Penny had all read her letter. And Papa Penny had written, too. Hadn't

he said she was Marjory, not Melissa?

In the midst of Marjory's puzzle, little great-grandmother reached over to pat her hand.

"You shall call me Granny, dearie," she said, "just as your mother used to. We'll be great cronies, we will!"

"Don't begin spoiling her, Mother," said Grandma Beach.

Granny only chuckled and twinkled her eyes at Marjory.

Soon after supper, Marjory went to bed. She had the dearest room that had been her mother's. It was over a porch on the river-side of the house. It looked through the great branches of a great willow to the river and the sky beyond. Her bed was a four-poster with a patch-work quilt and a wonderful old woven blanket of blue and white.

Marjory went to sleep with Granny's

kiss on her face and the song of the river in her ears. The last things she thought was —"Three grandmothers—for Aunt Eunice is really just like one—I'm going to call this 'The House of The Grandmothers.' "

CHAPTER IV

ROGER

THE first letter that went from The House of The Grandmothers to The Penny Bank was fat and important looking.

"I'm writing this right out in the old willow," it said. "It stands on the bank of the river. Wesley says—Wesley is Celia's husband and looks after Grandma Beach's place—that five brothers once, long ago, each planted a little willow all in the same hole. They've grown into the most wonderful tree with five great trunks. Right in the center where the trunks start is this place where I'm sitting. It's big enough to hold you and me and all the little Pennys at once. Mother used to sit here, too, Celia says. Granny has made the prettiest little red cushions for me to sit on. I have to do most of my playing out of doors, Lissy,

'cause Grandma Beach doesn't like noise in the house and not any clutter. Grandma Beach is different from Aunt Melissa. She thinks children should be seen, not heard, and things like that. But she's very kind, and Celia says it's just her way. And she's so tall and handsome —I'm proud to be her granddaughter. Aunt Eunice isn't very strong. She always does just what Grandma Beach says. She makes lovely things out of beads—purses and bags and things.

"I can always play in Granny's room. She's the oldest of the grandmothers, you know. Her room is the attic. It is just full of wonderful old things, furniture and chests and clothes. I can't begin to tell you about them. I love it up there and I love Granny.

"She won't always do things that Grandma Beach wants her to. She just laughs and says, 'I'm your mother, remember, Margaret.' And she always gets her own way. She's very old, and sometimes she doesn't remember things very well. But it doesn't matter, and we do have the loveliest times.

"Celia is so good to me. When she was a little girl, she lived in a little bit of a house and was very poor. Our mother

used to run away every chance she could get to play with her. Celia's lived with the Grandmas since she was married twenty years ago.

"I forgot to say the grandmas are all deaf, only they're not deaf just alike somehow. Aunt Eunice can't hear anything unless you talk into her ear-trumpet. Grandma Beach says she is just a little hard of hearing. Celia says that means she hears just a part of what you say and guesses at the rest. But if she guesses wrong, you mustn't tell her so. 'Cause Grandma Beach doesn't like to be corrected about anything, Lissy. Granny can't hear sometimes—but when you think she isn't going to, she hears. And most always she hears me.

"They all call me Margaret. They say that should have been my name. I've given up trying to tell them I'm not you, Lissy. I don't know whether they know or not. I've told Celia, of course. And she says, 'Never mind—leave well enough alone.' She says all the grandmothers wanted was a granddaughter, anyway, and they've got one that just suits them. Grandma Beach doesn't like to hear much about the Pennys, Lissy. I'm so sorry, but I can't help it."

It was a long letter, and it sounded as if it told everything there was to tell. But there were things that didn't get in. There wasn't a word about how dreadfully dull and stupid the old house was sometimes. Nor about the long, quiet meals. Nor about the early going-to-bed and the early getting up. Nor about how Marjory must ask always if she could do this or do that. Nor about trying to piece a bed-quilt for all the world like a little girl of a hundred years ago. It wasn't always just easy to be a granddaughter in this House of the Grandmothers.

But Marjory folded the letter and slipped it into its envelope. If she wrote Lissy any of these things, Lissy would think she was unhappy and would be unhappy, too. Besides, Marjory wasn't exactly unhappy. It was all so new and strange. And there

were Celia and Granny. And there was the old willow with its delightful little nest. And the river talking to itself. And Daddy expecting her to stay. Marjory addressed the letter very carefully, and gave it to Wesley to mail.

That night, at the supper-table, Grandma Beach said,

"Your birthday comes next week, doesn't it, Margaret?"

"Yes, Grandma," said Marjory. "Mine comes on Friday and Lissy's on Saturday. Isn't that nice?"

Grandma Beach didn't seem to hear.

"You are so very small of your age, Margaret," she said.

Marjory didn't like to be so small, any more than Grandma Beach liked to have her. But she couldn't do anything about it.

"You're like Granny, dearie," said

Granny in her unexpected way. "It's nice to be little. Little people always get their own way about things." Her old eyes twinkled merrily. "On your birthday, dearie, you shall have the pearl-box," she added.

Grandma Beach tried to look severe, but not even Grandma Beach could look severe at Granny.

The week went slowly by. Marjory spent long hours in the old willow with her books, or in Granny's room listening to her stories. Sometimes she and Celia went for a walk. Once, Grandma Beach dressed her in her prettiest gown and took her for a stately call on some friends. They all exclaimed at her and said,

"Isn't she her mother over again?"

And Grandma Beach smiled and looked so pleased that Marjory was very happy.

Although Grandma Beach was so strict and dignified, Marjory was growing very fond of her.

Wesley let her help feed the horses. One day, he took her for a long row in a flat-bottomed old boat called *The Water Lily*.

Friday morning Marjory opened her eyes with a delightful feeling that something lovely was going to happen. Sure enough, it was her birthday. Birthdays had always been great days in Marjory's life. She put on a pretty white linen gown, with a patent leather belt and patent leather shoes to match. As best she could, she tied up her hair with the rose-colored bow Granny liked best. Then she danced down stairs into the sunny dining-room. The Grandmas were all there standing back of their chairs, waiting for her.

"Good morning, Grandmothers," she said.

"Good morning, Margaret," said Grandma Beach and Aunt Eunice as usual. And "Good morning, dearie," said Granny, in her gentle voice.

But there was no birthday greeting, and no heap of little ribbon-tied packages at her plate, such as had always greeted Marjory's eyes on a birthday morning. She took her place soberly. Maybe, the Grandmas had some other way of keeping birthdays.

All through that long breakfast, Grandma Beach read into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet, news from the paper. Marjory didn't know what it was all about. She cared less. After breakfast, she waited in the kitchen for a few minutes, hoping Celia would say something about her birthday,

but she didn't. Celia was canning strawberries, and was very busy.

Marjory slipped away to the old willow. She sat down on one of Granny's scarlet cushions and stared at the river. What if it was one of the fairest of June mornings? What if the river did sparkle and beckon and sing? It was Marjory Brook's birthday, and everybody had forgotten it. Daddy was very, very far away. This was the first time she had ever been away from him on a birthday morning.

All at once, Marjory felt just a little like a Marjory Brook she had once known very well indeed. A Marjory Brook who always had whatever she wanted the minute she wanted it. If she didn't she screamed and cried till some one, somehow, got it for her. But she couldn't scream and cry in The House of the Grandmothers. What

would Grandma Beach say? And Granny?

"I mustn't—oh, I mustn't," she said. She sprang to her feet. As fast as she could, she ran across the yard. She wanted to run away from that thought. She hurried along the one straggling little street of Glenmore. She passed the store, the post-office, the little white church. Just beyond the church, in its great grove of pines, stood The Pines. Marjory didn't care for hotels. She crossed the road. Opposite the church, a little path not quite grown up enough to call a road, wandered away into the woods. Along its cool quiet way, Marjory took her hurt, angry, disappointed little self.

The path ran away among tall pines and balsams. Marjory ran with it till she was quite tired out. Then she sank down to rest on a mossy log in a lovely little hollow.

"SHE SWAYED AND WHIRLED AND POISED AIRILY ON THE PINE-NEEDLES."

It was sweet and fresh, with dew-drops still shining on the pine-needles. The angry little flush went out of Marjory's cheeks.

Hovering over some forest flowers, Marjory saw a great swarm of blue butterflies. They were more beautiful than flowers, themselves. They seemed to have caught the color of the sky and brushed it over with sunbeam gold. They rose and settled and rose again and settled again. Marjory forgot everything else. She forgot that she was a little girl even. All at once, she became a blue butterfly, herself, with burnished wings. On the tips of her toes, with her arms waving, she swayed and whirled and poised airily on the pine-needles.

Ever since she could remember, Marjory had loved to dance. But two years before this, she had been carried off by a Gypsy troupe and made to dance for them.

Since then, she had never cared to try. It made her unhappy even to think of those dreadful days. But dancing out here on the fragrant pine-needles, with all the sweet things of June about her, was different from dancing in hot stuffy tents and halls. She curved and pirouetted. She spread her wings and flitted across the sunny space between the pines. Then she balanced daintily on one foot, and hung poised over a clump of ferns.

"What are you doing?"

The voice was surprised and impatient. With a start Marjory stopped being a butterfly and came back to being a little girl. She peered this way and that eagerly. In the darkest part of the pine thicket, quite away from the sunshine, lying flat on his stomach and blinking at her, she saw a boy.

"What *are* you doing?" he asked again.

If the voice was cross, it was young. And it was some time since Marjory had heard any young voice except her own.

"Why, I'm dancing," she said.

"Of course," said the boy, still crossly. "But what for?"

"I saw the butterflies," said Marjory, "and I felt just like it." She didn't know, herself, quite why she had danced.

She went nearer the boy and sat down on a stone. He was still scowling. If only he would stop, Marjory thought he would have the nicest face. His eyes were strange and dark and made her think, somehow, of violets. His dark hair wanted to curl, but it was pushed 'way back on his forehead and plastered down so it couldn't.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Nothing," said the boy; "what I do most of the time."

"Why don't you do something?" suggested Marjory, as pleasantly as she could. She felt curious. She didn't know much about boys of her own age. The Pennys were little boys. And Joe was almost grown up.

"There's nothing a fellow can do," said the boy. He kicked at the pine-needles. Then he rolled over and hid his face in the moss.

Marjory looked at his back. It was a strong, sturdy looking back.

"Maybe," she said timidly, "you're like I used to be—cross because you can't have something you want."

The boy rolled over, sat up, and stared at her with those strange violet eyes.

"Maybe I am," he said, "what of it?"

"It's much nicer not to be—really," said Marjory. "I never am now—that is, not

often. This morning, I felt it coming on. That's why I came here."

The boy didn't answer, so Marjory went on.

"You see, it's my birthday." She must tell some one. "And Daddy's gone, and I'm 'way off here alone, and nobody's remembered about it."

"Gee," cried the boy. "What's a birthday? To-morrow's mine, too. But there's nobody to remember it, except Sally. And she's too busy to remember anything."

"How old are you?" cried Marjory.

"Thirteen," said the boy.

"To-morrow?"

"Yep."

"Why, I'm thirteen to-day," said Marjory, breathless with the discovery. "But I don't look a whole day older than you, do I? And Lissy is fifteen to-morrow. Isn't

that funny? I wish Lissy was here."

"I don't," snapped the boy; "I don't like girls."

"Not—Sally?" gasped Marjory.

"Sally's grown up," said the boy. "She's Dick's wife."

"Who's Dick?"

"Sort of a cousin," said the boy. "And my guardian. He's the only relative I've got anywhere. But I don't care. I don't like relatives."

"Why, I just love relatives," said Marjory. "The more I find, the better I like it. I'm visiting some of them now. Where do you live?"

"Hotels," said the boy, briefly.

"I've never lived in a hotel," said Marjory. "Is it fun?"

"Beastly," said the boy. "You can't do anything you want to. I can't even play

my victrola, 'cause some of the summer folks don't like it."

"That is too bad," said Marjory. "Is that what made you cross?"

"Gee," said the boy, springing to his feet. "As if that was anything—much!"

He stooped to pick up a book that had been lying beside him. It was such a fascinating looking book. The corners of its square red covers were worn a little as if it had been used a long time. There was a swish of leaves, and a stubby pencil fell out of it.

"Oh, let me see," cried Marjory. "It's a drawing-book, isn't it? Did you make the pictures yourself? Do let me see it."

The boy stuffed the book into his pocket as far as it would go. "They're no good," he said.

Marjory wouldn't have given up that in-

teresting-looking book with its quick glimpse of pencil-sketches inside, but just at that moment, faint and far-off across the stillness, there sounded a whistle.

"Is that noon?" cried Marjory. "Oh dear, what will Grandma say? I must hurry now. But you'll show it to me, sometime, won't you? Won't you please tell me your name. Mine is Marjory Brook."

"Roger Kent," said the boy.

CHAPTER V

A LEFT-OVER BIRTHDAY

MARJORY left Roger at the little white church on his way to The Pines. Halfway down the long street, she saw Celia coming, bareheaded, to meet her.

"And what do you suppose makes such a nice boy so cross?" she panted, after she had poured out the story of finding Roger in the Pine Grove.

"Dinner is ready," said Celia, gravely. "And the Grandmothers don't like to be kept waiting, you know, Miss Margaret."

Sure enough, when, a few minutes later, Marjory went into the cool dark dining-room, there, stiff and straight, in their three

chairs sat the three old ladies waiting for her.

"You are very late, Margaret," said Grandma Beach severely. "Where have you been?"

"Just for a little walk, Grandma," said Marjory. "I didn't mean to be gone so long, truly."

"Haven't I told you to ask before you leave the yard?" asked Grandma.

"Yes, Grandma," said Marjory.

There wasn't much use telling Grandma Beach, she thought, that she really hadn't meant to go out of the yard. Grandma Beach wouldn't understand. Aunt Eunice wouldn't hear. Marjory looked appealingly toward Granny. But Granny seemed lost in her own pleasant thoughts.

"To help you remember another time," said Grandma Beach, "I must punish you,

Margaret. You may stay in the house all the afternoon."

Never in all her life, so far as she could remember, had Marjory been punished. And on her birthday. It was dreadful. She hung her head and her cheeks were scarlet. What would Lissy say? And Daddy?

"Margaret will spend the afternoon with me," said Granny suddenly. "Will you like that, dearie?"

Marjory didn't know whether Granny had heard Grandma Beach or not. She wanted to nod her head, but if she did she knew a great tear would hop out of one eye—maybe out of both.

"Very well," said Grandma Beach.

Granny's attic room was long and low, extending over the whole house. There was a great gable window in each end.

The rafters had been stained a deep rich brown. Priceless old rugs of soft colors lay on the floor. All the furniture was old. Granny showed Marjory many treasures. Among them was a sampler. The name set into it in patient little stitches was "Margaret." It belonged to a Margaret farther back even than Granny's childhood.

Marjory loved the little old sampler. So Granny found her the frock that the little long-ago Margaret had worn. It was of fragile sprigged muslin, lavender and white. It had a low neck and puffs for sleeves. A string of purple beads went with it.

Marjory slipped into the gown, and Granny fastened the beads around her neck.

"Shall I dance for you?" she cried to the delighted old lady.

Granny kept time to the steps while Marjory pirouetted up and down the long room.

Suddenly, as she was trying to ripple like the sunbeam on the floor, Granny caught her two hands.

"Granny'll show you how to dance," she cried.

It was a quaint, old-time, formal thing that Granny and Marjory danced, just fitted to the old room and its furniture, and Marjory's sprigged muslin frock. Marjory caught its slow step and dignified courtesy so well that Granny stopped to clap her tiny wrinkled hands.

Out of breath, she sank down in her little rocker. Marjory sat down on a little stool at Granny's feet. And Granny told her stories of long-ago days when she had danced that very same dance.

"Margaret and Eunice never could dance well," she said. "It takes a little person like you or me. Always laugh and dance

and sing, Margie, just as Granny has."

It was a wonderful afternoon. When Granny and Marjory went down to supper, it was hard to tell which face was happier. Nothing more was said about punishments. Neither was anything said about birthdays. There hadn't been even a card from Daddy or Lissy.

Marjory fell asleep that night trying to decide if ever any one else had had so strange a birthday. It didn't seem quite funny, yet, but she was almost sure it would when she wrote it to Lissy.

Next morning, an oriole in the elm outside her window woke her with his golden call. In the very middle of it, Marjory was at the window. But swift as she was, the bird was only a golden flash through the topmost branches of the tree.

Marjory slipped into a little old gingham.

It was almost worn out, but it was yellow to match the oriole and the sunbeams and all the glad June morning.

Upstairs to the attic, she flew.

Granny stood at the door.

"Happy birthday, little grand-girl," she said.

"This isn't," began Marjory. Then she remembered how often Granny made mistakes about days and such things. So she only laughed and dropped a courtesy.

"Thank you, Granny," she said.

Downstairs, they went, and into the dining-room. It was ablaze with morning sunshine. There were roses on the table, and at Marjory's plate a pile of little, white, ribbon-tied packages.

"Many happy returns, little Granddaughter," said Grandma Beach, with one of her rare smiles.

"Happy birthday, Margaret," said Aunt Eunice.

"This isn't my birthday," said Marjory, half bewildered. "It's Lissy's."

"Delicious," said Grandma, catching the sound of Marjory's last word. "The weather is June-like, Margaret. Here are your little gifts. But wait till breakfast is over before you open them. That's the way your mother always did."

Marjory decided to leave explaining about the birthday till after breakfast, too. She slipped into her place and forgot everything but that fascinating pile of gifts. She hurried through her dish of oat-meal and crunched her roll. Then she wondered if mother, too, had hurried through birthday breakfast only to find she must wait till Aunt Eunice had heard the news, and every one had finished eating.

"Now, you may open them, Margaret," said Grandma, when Aunt Eunice had sipped her last cup of coffee. "Some of them came yesterday, but I kept them all for your birthday."

"Yesterday was really my birthday, you know," began Marjory. She took up one of the smallest packages, and started to open it.

"We know your birthday and your age, child," said Grandma Beach. "We've spoken about it each year."

"I made that for you, Margaret," said Aunt Eunice, beaming at Marjory as she brought out of its wrappings a small purse, blue, with pink roses in it, all made of tiny beads.

"How lovely!" cried Marjory into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet. "Couldn't I make one of these, sometime, instead of a bed-

quilt? I'd love to do one all myself for Lissy."

Aunt Eunice nodded.

"How often you use that word 'delicious,'" said Grandma Beach. "I should never think of calling Eunice's work 'delicious.' It is fine and beautiful."

But by this time, in the package from Grandma Beach, Marjory had found a little book with a hand-painted cover for a diary. To it was tied a small gold pencil.

"I'll write stories in it," cried Marjory. "Oh, I love it, Grandma."

There was a story-book from John and Doris, a handkerchief from Lissy, and cards from the other Pennys, big and little. There was a foreign card from Daddy. And there was a package from him, too, that had been mailed from one of the New York shops. Inside the box was a lovely little

gown, of the soft sunbeam color Marjory so loved.

Grandma Beach examined the little gown carefully.

"Your father must have money now," she said. "Your clothes are all of the best. And this gown is beautifully made."

"Daddy has lots of money," cried Marjory. She danced about, her gifts in her arms, too excited to remember that in The House of the Grandmothers children were supposed to be seen, not heard.

"I never called my father 'Daddy,' " said Grandma.

"I couldn't find the little pearl-box this morning, dearie," said Granny. "But just as soon as I do, you shall have it."

"My gift will come later, too," smiled Celia, as she came in to clear away the breakfast things.

"But you know, Celia," began Marjory, "this isn't—" she hesitated, stopped short. Maybe it wasn't quite polite to speak about the mistake in the birthdays.

"I suppose it doesn't seem like others you've had," said Celia to Marjory's unfinished sentence. "But I think you'll like it, Miss Margaret."

In the morning's mail, there was a long letter from Daddy. It didn't sound as if Daddy liked being so far away from her any more than she liked being away from him.

> "But three Grandma-ladies and one Celia ought to be able to look after my Marjory-girl," he wrote. "From what you say, I think Celia can manage it all alone. When you don't know quite what to do, ask her. Never mind, if the Grandmas do confuse you with Lissy. It can't make much difference. When I come home, I'll bring Lissy and let them see that they've two Granddaughters."

There was a letter from Lissy, too. It told about everything in The Penny Bank, and said that in just a few days, now, she was going to Doris and John in New York. Then it said, "Papa Penny says to do whatever Celia says about the Grandmas. She knows them better than any one else does."

At dinner, Grandma Beach said,

"Margaret, you are to have a little birthday supper out under the old willow. A birthday supper all by yourself doesn't seem just right. So, I've asked a friend of ours at The Pines to send over two or three children from there."

Grandma Beach looked so pleased. Marjory tried to look so, too. But a birthday party made up of children she'd never seen before did seem strange.

Out in the kitchen, she said to Celia,

"Couldn't I have Roger? He lives at

The Pines, and I'm some acquainted with him, and I like him if he is cross. Besides, his birthday is to-day."

"Miss Margaret," said Celia, beating eggs to a delightfully white froth, "when you've lived with the Grandmas as long as I have, you'll find it's best to let them make their own plans. You'll have a much better party if you do just as they say."

So Marjory gave up Roger. She went slowly upstairs to write a letter to Lissy. But at the top of the first flight, she heard Granny calling to her.

"Come, help me hunt for the pearl-box," she said. "Maybe you can find it."

"But I couldn't find it anywhere, Celia," Marjory told Celia later, while Celia helped her get ready for her party. "Where do you suppose Granny has put it?"

"Why, Miss Margaret," said Celia. "Granny gave that little box of jewels to your mother when she was married. She's forgotten all about it now."

"Poor Granny," said Marjory softly, as she slipped into the little new gown.

Just before six, when the sunbeams lay long and bright across the lawn, Marjory danced down to the old willow. There was the table, with a white cloth on it. In the center was a great bowl of yellow roses and honeysuckle. It wasn't set, because Celia didn't know how many guests there would be.

Marjory could scarcely wait to see those guests. She could scarcely wait to write Lissy how funny her birthday was—a day late, with a tea-party of strangers.

By and by, dragging himself along the road from The Pines, and coming still more

unwillingly along the tree-shaded drive of The Willows, Marjory saw one solitary boy. It was Roger. He was so stiff and starched in his best clothes, she didn't know him at first. When she did, she rushed to meet him.

"Oh, Roger," she cried, "now you've come, I'm going to ask Grandma to let you stay for my party."

"I'm asked to it," said Roger. "That's why I came. I didn't want to," he added, slowly.

"Didn't—want—to come—to my party?" said Marjory.

"Of course I didn't know 'twas yours," said Roger. "How could I?"

"But where are the rest of them?" asked Marjory.

"The rest of what?" said Roger, sitting down on a red cushion.

"My party," said Marjory. "Grandma said she'd asked two or three."

"Aren't relatives queer things?" said Roger. "Your Grandma telephoned Sally to send over several children to a party at six. Sally didn't know it, but when she came to look, every child had gone on a picnic. But me. So she made me come. Gee—but I'm glad it was you."

Just then Celia came out to lay the table. She laughed when she saw the one guest. But when she found that he was the very one and the only one Marjory wanted, she said everything was all right.

"Granny's coming to your party, she says," she told Marjory.

"You'll love my Granny," cried Marjory to Roger. "Here she comes, now."

Roger's scowl didn't look as if he was going to love any one. But when Granny

held out her hand and smiled, his own scowl got lost somewhere in the pleasantest smile, which made him look like a different boy.

"It was a lovely party after all," wrote Marjory in a long letter to Lissy, next day. "Just Granny and Roger and me at the table, with Grandma Beach, Aunt Eunice, and Celia all helping us to things. There were the best things to eat, but I can't take time to tell you about them now,—except the birthday cake. That was Celia's present to me. It was frosted in white and it had yellow candles. And, Lissy, there were fifteen, instead of thirteen. So you see, the Grandmas do think that I'm you."

There was a postscript.

"Granny can't find the pearl box. Celia says of course she can't, because she gave it to our mother when she was married. There were two keys. Mother must have had one, Celia says. Granny's given me the other to wear round my neck on a little silk cord. Doesn't that sound just like a story-book?"

CHAPTER VI

THE PONY CART

CELIA came out on the porch, closing the screen-door carefully, so as not to disturb the Grandmas, all taking their afternoon naps. Nap time in The House of the Grandmothers was the dullest time of day for Marjory. She sat, now, in the hammock with a story-book.

"You are to spend the afternoon with Master Roger at The Pines," said Celia.

"Oh, Celia," cried Marjory, springing up. "Am I, really? How did you ever do it?"

"I didn't do it all," said Celia. "Mrs. Sally Carr telephoned that she was going away for the afternoon, and would you come

and stay with Roger. Your Grandma didn't approve at first, but I said young company would be good for you. And Granny sided with me. You're to go at three and you must be back at five. Don't forget, or you'll never be allowed to go again."

Marjory found Roger all by himself in one shady corner of the great porch. A number of gay little folks were at play around one of the big swings in the yard, not far away. But Roger sat disconsolately in his hammock.

"Let's go for a walk," he said. "Those kids make so much noise."

Marjory looked half wistfully at the children. They seemed to be having such good times.

"Where will we go?" she said.

"I'll show you," said Roger.

They went along the same pretty path Marjory had followed on her birthday morning. But they didn't stop in the butterfly hollow. The path began going up hill, just here, and they went along with it. Marjory soon lost her breath, and sank down in a little heap under a tall tree.

"Please don't go quite so fast," she said.

"Girls never are any good at climbing," he said. But he sat down. His own face was flushed and tired.

"What makes you so cross, Roger?" said Marjory suddenly. "You are such a nice boy if you wouldn't scowl so and say such scowly things."

Roger's dark eyes flashed.

"I'm not cross," he said. "And if I am, I don't care if I am."

"I'm not cross, since I knew Lissy Penny," said Marjory.

"You don't have any reason to be," said Roger. "I have."

"What is the reason?" cried Marjory.

"I can't tell you," said Roger.

"Is it a big reason?"

"Big enough."

"Can't you ever tell me?"

Roger shook his head, his scowl was bigger and blacker than ever.

"Oh, dear," said Marjory, "then how can I ever help you any?"

"You can't," said Roger.

"Can't Sally?"

Roger shook his head.

"Nor Dick?"

"Not any one," said Roger.

And then suddenly he rolled over on his face. If he hadn't been such a big boy, Marjory would have thought he was crying. But big boys never cried about things—even

big bad things that couldn't be helped.

For what seemed a long time, Marjory sat still. Then she decided anything was better than just sitting there and staring at Roger's disconsolate back. She got up and went slowly along the little mossy path. Roger would follow her in a minute. If he didn't, she'd come back.

Tempting little paths led off here and there from the main one. Marjory decided she'd take the prettiest and go wherever it did.

Another pretty one led from that, and another from that. She went on and on. To her surprise, by and by, she came to a place where the trees were taller and farther apart. In the distance, she saw a road running back down the hill. And in a minute she saw a house.

It was a pretty house with a porch run-

ning almost all the way around it. Back of it was a large barn. Marjory decided she'd wait here until Roger came along. He must come in a minute now.

There didn't seem to be any one at home, except a pony harnessed to a pony-cart, waiting at a side door. At sight of Marjory, the pony neighed impatiently.

She was a pretty little creature, with dark spots and light spots and a shaggy mane. The four-wheeled cart, which was of just the right size to go with her, was of wicker. It was cushioned with tan leather. There were tan lines, and a smart little whip which didn't look as if it had been used much. A pair of small driving-gloves lay on the seat.

Marjory forgot everything but that dear little horse and cart.

"How I wish you were mine," she cried. "Oh, how I wish you were mine."

The pony looked anxiously toward the house. So far as Marjory could see, there was nothing to keep her standing there. If she had taken it into her pony head to do so, she could have gone down the neat driveway to the road and down the road. Marjory could see herself hopping into that pretty cart, slipping on those little gloves, picking up lines and whip, and driving down the road wherever it went.

She drew a deep breath. Then she ran up the steps. She crossed the porch and knocked on the door. It was half open, but no one answered. Marjory pushed the door open and went in.

On the floor lay a little girl. Her bobbed black hair showed under a little round red hat with a red rosette.

"Oh, dear," thought Marjory. "Every one seems to be having trouble this after-

noon. Maybe, I'd better go right away."

But the thought of that dear little spotted horse held her right there. She must find out about it.

"Is—is the horse yours?" she asked.

The little girl sat up, staring. A lock of black hair hung down over her eyes. Her red hat was tilted over one ear. Her eyes were bright and black through tears.

"Who are you?" she cried.

"Marjory Brook," said Marjory. "Is something awful the matter?"

"You'd think so," said the other girl. She got to her feet and rubbed her eyes. "Just 'spose you had to go away off somewhere where you'd never been and stay a whole summer. Wouldn't that be awful?"

"I did," said Marjory. "I'm visiting my Grandmothers at The Willows. Isn't any one going with you?"

"Father," said the little girl, with another rush of tears. "And mother and sister and brother and baby."

"Then what are you crying about?" said Marjory. "Who else is there who isn't going?"

"Molly," wailed the little girl. "Oh, I just can't leave Molly. And she can't go. What shall I do?"

"Molly?" said Marjory.

"My dear, dear little po-o-ny," cried the little girl. "Everybody's gone somewhere this afternoon to do some last thing, except Molly and me. Father left me to drive her down to The Pines. Mr. Spicer down there is going to keep her for me. But, oh, I know he won't be real good to her."

A shrill little neigh from outside interrupted just here

"Molly doesn't like men very well," said the little girl. "Not even father. She just likes Susy—that's all she likes. Hear her call me. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Would she like—me?" said Marjory timidly. "'Cause if she would, I'd keep her till you come back. I'd take such care of her, Susy."

Susy stopped crying to stare at Marjory.

"You're one of the summer folks down at The Pines," she said.

"I'm not," said Marjory. "Didn't you hear me say just now I'm visiting Grandma Beach at The Willows, only I call it The House of the Grandmothers, 'cause there are three of 'em."

"That's where Celia Dense lives," said Susy. "Are you that little granddaughter-girl? I thought she was Margaret."

"They do call me that," said Marjory;

"I'm really Marjory. But I'm the granddaughter. May I have Molly?"

"If you only would," said Susy. "It would relieve my mind greatly."

Just at that moment, out of the silent house, somewhere, spoke a clock.

"One," it said, "two, three, four!"

"Four o'clock," cried Marjory. "And I must be home by five. The Grandmas won't like it if I'm late a minute. And where is that Roger Kent?"

"We'll get right into the cart," said Susy, all at once brisk and full of business. "And we'll drive straight to The Willows. It won't take long by the road. And Molly can go—when she wants to—you'll see."

"But Roger?" said Marjory anxiously.

"He's that sulky boy down at The Pines," said Susy. "He'll go back there, all right. He's always wandering about by himself.

Would you like to go live with Marjory for awhile, Molly?" she cooed at the horse. "She would," she announced to Marjory. "See how she rubs her head on my shoulder. That means 'yes.' "

"May I really have her?" said Marjory, reaching up to pet the little horse. "Won't your father care—or any one?"

"He'll be dreadfully pleased," said Susy. "He knows your Grandmas. Every one does round here. Father knew how I hated to let Molly go to The Pines. It would be too dreadful, wouldn't it, Molly?"

"I guess I've got money enough to pay for her now, Susy," said Marjory anxiously. "But if I haven't, Daddy'll send me some."

"Pay for her?" cried Susy, her eyes flashing. "I'll have you know, Molly isn't for sale—not for all of your old money, Marjory."

"Why—just for the summer, I meant, Susy," said Marjory. "I didn't mean to buy her, exactly, but—rent her. Is that it?"

Susy's eyes stopped blazing to twinkle.

"She isn't for rent, either," she said. "But I'll lend her to you just till I get back. All you have to do is to feed her—and she won't cost much this time of year, because she'll eat grass mostly. But she does like sugar-lumps, you see, and candy and cookies. And Mr. Spicer wouldn't ever give them to her. And he'd rent her to the summer-folks to drive. That was why I was so worried."

"I'll give her all the sugar-lumps she'll eat," said Marjory.

"Well, if we're going to get to The Willows at five, we'd better start," said Susy. "I'll put in the little rug for cold days and

the duster for warm ones and her brush and curry-comb and everything."

Marjory climbed into the cart. Susy bustled back and forth from the barn. At the last minute, into the yard came a car with Susy's father and mother and a baby sister in it. Of course they had to hear all about the deal.

"Mrs. Beach of The Willows may not approve, little folks," drawled Susy's good-natured father. "But go, find out for yourselves. That's the best way."

"Wesley'll help take care of her," said Marjory; "and I think Celia can persuade the Grandmas."

But the nearer they came to The House of the Grandmothers, the less likely it seemed. The two little girls in the pony cart were rather silent and anxious. The same thought was in both heads. Just sup-

pose the Grandmas wouldn't keep Molly.

Perhaps the same thought was in Molly's head, too. Anyway, she went more and more slowly past The Pines, through Glenmore, and along the drive into The Willows. There, standing on the side porch, was an excited little group. Grandma Beach, taller and stiffer than usual, Aunt Eunice, with her ear-trumpet, and Celia were all listening to Roger. Molly, seeing the end of her journey, broke into a brisk little trot, and drew up in fine style, at the foot of the steps.

"She went off by herself," Roger was saying. "I supposed she'd gone back to the hotel. But she wasn't there; so I came over to see if she had come home."

"I wasn't lost, Roger," cried Marjory, springing down from the cart. She was dusty and flushed. Her yellow hair was

tumbled, its pink bow half off. "I just went on to Susy's house. And please, Grandma Beach," she hurried on, speaking loud so Grandma would be sure to hear right, "may I keep Susy's pony and cart while she's gone away? She can't bear to leave her, and I'd just love her, and she doesn't eat much. Daddy will send me money to buy all her sugar-lumps. Please, Grandma Beach."

"Don't shout so, child," said Grandma Beach. "One would think I was deaf, like your Aunt Eunice. Whatever do you want with a horse? You're not big enough to drive one."

"I'm big as Susy, Grandma," pleaded Marjory. "And it's such a little horse. I know Daddy wouldn't mind. Can't you do something, Celia?" she whispered.

"Miss Margaret does need exercise," said Celia gravely.

"She looks it at this minute, Celia," said Grandma Beach, with a grim smile. "Take her in and help put her to rights for supper. She can go for a ride with Wesley whenever she needs air."

Marjory didn't look at Susy or Roger. She lifted her tumbled yellow head high and started to obey Grandma.

Then out from the door darted Granny. Her head was high, too. Her eyes sparkled.

"We want the dear little pony and cart to take us out riding, don't we, dearie?" she cried. "Of course we do, Margaret. They shall be my birthday gift to my little grand-girl, till I find the pearl-box."

Down the steps to the pony tripped Granny. She stroked the soft nose and tan-

gled her fingers in the shaggy mane. Molly reached toward her, eagerly nosing her hand.

"Sugar-lumps, little Margie," called Granny. "Run, get some sugar."

CHAPTER VII

THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS

"AND when I came back," said the next letter from Marjory to Lissy, "everything had all been arranged. Susy's father had come for her in the car. 'Cause if Molly hadn't stayed with us, she'd have been left at The Pines, you see. Susy was so glad she just hopped right up to Granny and kissed her hard. And Granny kissed back. Wesley takes beautiful care of her—Molly, I mean. She is white as snow where she is white, and shiny where she's dark, and her mane and tail are lovely and fluffy. You'd love her, Lissy. Susy has freckles and a pug nose, but she makes me think of you. I wish she hadn't gone west, but she has. Oh, Lissy, I do wish you were here to go to ride with Roger and Molly and me. It's such fun."

When she read the letter, the busy little

girl in the Penny flat almost wished so, too.

Somehow, after Molly came to stay there, The House of the Grandmothers wasn't near so quiet and dull as it had been before. Often, there was something so funny to tell about the little horse, that, even if it was at the table, Marjory forgot and told it. And Granny helped. Sometimes, they both laughed, and even Grandma Beach smiled, and told Aunt Eunice about it.

Marjory would probably have killed the little horse with sugar, if she'd fed her whenever she wanted to. She bought a whole pound of lumps, because, as she told Celia, she didn't feel the Grandmas ought to pay for all Molly ate.

As for Molly herself, she liked her new home. But whenever she went out, she wanted to go back on the hill. Once, when Granny and Marjory were driving all by

themselves, they let her have her own way. Straight up the hill she hurried, into the empty yard, stopping with an eager little neigh at the side porch with its closed door and fast-shut blinds.

"Susy'll come back in the fall," Marjory comforted the little horse. She had to get out and lead the pony out of the yard and part way down the hill before she could persuade her to go back to The House of the Grandmothers.

One afternoon Grandma Beach had a long talk with Roger's cousin Sally over the 'phone. At the end of it, she called Marjory.

"Would you and Roger like to go for a ride this afternoon?" she asked. "All by yourselves? Mrs. Carr is going out for a motor ride with some friends. And she says Roger is used to horses."

"Oh, may we, really?" cried Marjory.

"I will allow you to drive alone to The Pines," said Grandma, graciously. "The little horse seems quite safe. Roger will be waiting for you there. Be sure and be home by supper-time."

Marjory felt very proud of Molly and herself, too, when they set out all by themselves. She did wish Lissy could see them. When she drew up at the steps of The Pines, she found Roger looking almost happy. And a crowd of admiring summer children watched them drive away.

"We're going to try a new road," said Roger. "I like new roads. I'll drive —your Grandma would want me to. But maybe I'll let you drive, coming back."

"All right," Marjory agreed pleasantly. "Where'll we find the new road, Roger?"

"There'll be one waiting for us," said Roger.

They hadn't gone far below The Pines, when a delightful new road showed itself winding away among tall pines and balsams and hemlocks and spruces. It didn't look as if it were traveled much.

"It wouldn't do for a car," said Roger. "But Molly can go nicely."

At each turn, the new road seemed lovelier. They met a brook on its way back to the river. They caught glimpses of rosy-faced flowers through the green. In places it was overgrown with grass and moss.

"Maybe it goes to Fairy Land," said Marjory softly.

"Pshaw," said Roger. "Woods like these are better than any of your old Fairy-Lands."

"But just suppose," said Marjory eagerly,

"that we *should* meet a real live Fairy stepping out of one of these old trees, and she should say, 'What is the treasured wish of your heart?' what would you say, Roger?"

To Marjory's utter surprise, Roger dropped the lines.

"What made you?" he cried. "Oh, what made you?"

"What made I—what?" said Marjory.

Molly, meanwhile, helped herself to grass.

"Made me think of things to wish," said Roger. "I'd almost forgotten—just for a little."

"I didn't mean to," cried Marjory. "Of course, I didn't. But why won't you tell me what it is you want, Roger? I've a purse full of money, and Daddy has lots more."

"Money won't get it," said Roger, wretchedly.

"Do—tell me, please," begged Marjory.

"I can't," said Roger, the black frown on his forehead. "You see, I promised Dick I wouldn't."

"Oh, dear," said Marjory. "Do write and ask him if you can't tell just me."

"I don't want you to know, I guess," said Roger.

Marjory felt somehow that Roger's trouble must be something bigger than most boy-troubles are. She did so want to help him. But she couldn't—when she didn't even know what it was.

Roger picked up the lines and brought Molly back into the road. It was all overgrown now, and grew narrower and narrower. It didn't curve in and out looking for all the prettiest spots, but shot straight up the hillside. By and by it rattled over some stones, crossed a little rustic bridge,

turned sharply, and came into a small cleared space. In the center of the space, quite as if it had been dropped there, was a little log house.

"Oh, Roger," cried Marjory, clapping her hands, "isn't it dear? Wouldn't it make the darlingest play-house that you ever saw?"

Molly was left to nibble grass, while the children ran to the house. A good-sized porch, almost as large as the house, ran around it. Its steps and posts were all of logs. In the front of the house was a door. On each side of the door was a window. And on each side of the house were two windows.

"It's a camp," said Roger. "Some one's built it and gone off and left it."

"I don't know what you call it," said Marjory, "but I say it's a play-house. And

the strange part of it is, it's just exactly what I was going to ask the Fairy for."

Roger might scoff at Fairies, but he was just as much interested in the delightful little log-house as Marjory was. Through the windows they caught glimpses of a square low room. A fireplace was opposite the door. There was a door on one side of the fireplace. A deer head hung over the door. There were skins of animals on the floor.

"We've got to get in somehow," said Marjory.

That the door was locked didn't make much difference. One of the windows at last slid up. Roger boosted and Marjory crawled through. A key was found in the lock of the door. It turned in a creaking rusty fashion. And the next minute, the door stood wide open.

The children explored every nook and cranny of the delightful little house in the woods. The door near the fireplace led into a tiny lean-to of a kitchen. Back of this was a small porch. The ground sloped away into thick woods. But a little mossy path led the children straight to a cold clear mountain-spring.

Going back into the house, Roger discovered the beds. They were bunks, which let down from the ceiling on strong chains.

"Do you suppose it belongs to any one?" said Marjory.

"One of your Fairies, maybe," jeered Roger.

"Then—let's move in," said Marjory. "Let's bring things from home and furnish it. I know just what we'll need, 'cause Lissy writes me every single thing she and

Doris buy for the flat. Chairs and tables and a couch—"

"Camps aren't furnished much," said Roger. "We'll have a table and two chairs —one for each of us. We'll gather balsam and make a couch."

"I'll bring some of the red cushions," said Marjory.

"And we'll each bring a hammock," said Roger.

"I'll bring some old dishes," said Marjory. "Celia will let me, I know. Then some day we can have a party."

"Folks don't have parties out in the woods like this," said Roger. "They camp out and hunt and fish and do things like that."

"Well, we'll camp out then," said Marjory. "Only do let's have it for our own little house, Roger."

"Don't tell any one," said Roger. "Or

all those summer kids will be here and spoil everything."

"Just Celia and the Grandmas," said Marjory. "But they won't tell."

"Marjory," said Roger suddenly, "if I can ever get it here, I'm going to bring my victrola. It's just a little one, you know."

"Won't that be lovely?" cried Marjory. "Will Sally let you?"

"Sally don't care what I do, so long as I'm not in her way," said Roger.

Molly had strayed down the road. It was lucky she had found just the kind of grass she liked best, or she might have gone all the way back to her old home.

Marjory's face was so bright and eager at the table that night, Grandma knew she wanted to talk.

"You had a good ride, didn't you, Margaret?" she said.

"Oh, Grandma," bubbled Marjory, "Roger and I have found the dearest little house right in the woods. May we take things to it, Grandma, and have it for our play-house?"

"Is it safe?" said Grandma. "Away from water?"

"There's just a spring there and the littlest brook," said Marjory.

"Perhaps it will do the poor little boy good," said Grandma. "You must do all you can for Roger, Margaret."

"Granny'll help furnish the little play-house," said Granny.

Granny did. None of the other grown-ups remembered about it long. Only, of course, Grandma Beach had to be asked whenever Marjory and Roger went to it. But Granny was almost as much interested in it as the children themselves. She found

a little spider-legged table with drawers in it, and two quaint chairs to match. These went up one day in the cart. She found odds and ends of old sprigged china. Marjory carried these up in her lap, and set them out in a little cupboard near the fireplace. Two hammocks went up and some scarlet cushions. And though Roger sniffed and said a camp didn't want curtains, Granny and Marjory didn't agree with him, and made some out of white muslin. When they were up and tied back with red ribbons to match the cushions, the little room was quite homelike. The fireplace, of course, couldn't be used for fires, so Marjory filled it up with evergreens and red bunch-berries.

Roger cut balsam boughs and piled them high in one corner of the porch. On this they put a scarlet and yellow blanket from

one of Granny's many chests. Marjory's hammock had its place on the porch. Roger's was hung in the little green nest of evergreens near the spring.

Of course, all this moving and settling took some time. It took longer because Roger insisted that nobody at The Pines should know anything about the play-house. Because of this secrecy, for a long time there was no way of getting the victrola there.

Then one day Roger ran into the yard of The Willows quite out of breath.

"They're all gone for a row on the river," he said. "Every single kid, except the babies—and they're having naps. Now, we can take the victrola."

"Granny's going with us to-day," said Marjory. "She's wild to see our house."

"She won't care," said Roger. "Gran-

ny's the best sport I know of. She'll think it's a lark."

Sure enough, Granny did. She held Molly, while, between them, Marjory and Roger tugged and hoisted the victrola into the back of the cart. It was a good thing that it was so small, or they couldn't have done it. But in it went and Roger got himself in, too, and mounted guard over it.

Almost to the camp, Roger had a sudden thought. Granny was telling Marjory one of her old-time stories. Marjory was lost to all else. Very quietly he slipped in a record and set the little machine going. The next minute, if there were any fairies about, as Marjory felt sure there must be, they must have fallen over each other with glee. For, as the strains of music rang out through the woods, Molly took to her heels, Granny hung on to her, and Marjory

clutched Granny. And it was to the stirring notes of the Wedding March from Lohengrin that the whole turnout drew up at the door of the house in the woods.

"And Roger lay right down flat on the ground and laughed," wrote Marjory to Lissy. "It was the very first time I've ever known him to laugh, Lissy. And the victrola's so pretty in one of our front-windows. We can play it all the time if we want to—nobody cares. Granny and I dance to it. Then we sat on the porch and ate cookies. I never ate such good cookies. Molly had two. There's one thing we just can't settle about—that's the name for our camp. Roger says all woods camps have names. He says Camp Happy is silly. And Fairy Camp is silly. Brook Camp sounds as if it was all mine. When I tried Kent Camp he said it sounded as if I stuttered. I like Kent-Brook for both of us, but he says that sounds like a guide-book. Do think of a name for it, Lissy, as good as The Penny Bank.

"To-day, Roger showed Granny and me his book of sketches. They're per-

fectly wonderful. But he won't draw anything for me—not even a picture of the camp. I wanted one for you. But he was dreadfully cross about it."

Later a postscript was added.

"Granny named the camp for us. She said when we were riding home, 'I like your Good Times Camp.' And Roger just shouted, 'It's named, Margie, it's named.' 'Good Times Camp'—doesn't it sound good, Lissy? Don't you wish you could see it?"

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRUISE OF THE "WATER LILY"

IT was dreadfully hot. The ground was baked. The flowers hung drowsy heads. The air swam with light and heat. Everywhere locusts shrilled.

Even the old willow drooped, each tiny leaf still. But the murmur of the river made it seem cooler there than anywhere else. Roger lay flat in the grass in the deepest shade. Marjory, in a thin white gown, sat in the willow-nest. Her book had fallen to the ground.

"Oh, let's do something," cried Roger, sitting up. He turned his back to the sun. The scowl on his forehead was big and black.

"What?" said Marjory, listlessly.

"You think of something," commanded Roger.

"I was trying to think of icebergs and ice-lemonade tinkling in glasses," said Marjory. "That's the way Lissy does when it's hot."

"I'm sick to death hearing about Lissy," cried Roger. "You're always Lissy-ing."

"Don't care if I am," said Marjory. She sat up straight, her cheeks scarlet with heat and temper. "Lissy's never cross and impolite, anyhow."

"I'm not, either," snapped Roger. "My head aches and this sun hurts it."

"Let's go to the store and get ice-cream cones," said Marjory. "I've some money in my little bead purse."

"Too hot," said Roger. Then suddenly, in a different voice, he exclaimed, "I know what let's do, Margie!"

"I can't think of anything beter than ice-cream," said Marjory.

"This has ice-cream in it," hurried Roger. "'Way down the river is a little place called Riverside where they keep the best ice-cream. They have all kinds, and you eat it at little tables down by the river. Sally took me there once."

Marjory shook her head.

"We never could walk so far, Roger," she said. "And you know Grandma says it's too hot for Molly to go out till after supper."

"Nobody wants her to," said Roger. "We'll take the boat."

"Oh, we couldn't, could we?" cried Marjory, thrilled at the thought.

"Guess if I can row on the St. Lawrence, where Dick lives, I can on this dinky little stream," said Roger.

"I'm afraid the Grandmas wouldn't like it," said Marjory slowly.

"They're all asleep," said Roger, looking toward the house with its tight-shut blinds and doors. "We'll be back before they even begin to wake up."

Marjory knew perfectly well that the Grandmas wouldn't like Roger's plan. She knew she ought not to go. But when she thought about it, afterward, it almost seemed that there were two Marjories inside her that hot afternoon. One was the little new Marjory, who was trying to be just as good a granddaughter as Lissy. The other was the little old Marjory who had always pleased herself, no matter whether any one else was pleased or not. The little new Marjory said, "Oh, I wouldn't do that!" And the little old Marjory asked pertly, "Well, why not, I'd like to know?"

Meanwhile, Roger had something to say, too.

"Wesley and Celia won't get back from Ridgewood till supper-time," he pleaded.

"Lissy wouldn't do it," said the little new Marjory. "Bother Lissy!" said the little old Marjory, impolitely pushing the little new Marjory to one side. "Go on, do it. Besides, you know yourself, that Grandma Beach says you must be good to Roger and make him happy."

"I wouldn't be a 'fraid cat," taunted Roger.

"I'm not," said Marjory. She got to her feet. She marched through the sun to the steps and down them to the boat. She clambered in, clutching at the edges. Roger gave the boat a push, sprang in, and took up the oars. He seemed to know how to use them.

"We'll keep in the shade," he said, "where the water doesn't dazzle so."

The *Water Lily* crept along in the shade of the willows. Marjory trailed her hand in the water. She tried to think she was having the best time she'd ever had. But, somehow, she wasn't very happy. Roger didn't look any happier than usual, either.

"It's a heavy old scow," he complained. "You ought to see Dick's skiff—it skims along like a bird."

"I've been in lovely boats," said Marjory, "with Daddy on the Hudson River."

"Pshaw," said Roger, "you ought to see the St. Lawrence."

"The St. Lawrence isn't any bigger than the Hudson," said Marjory. She didn't know whether it was or not. But Roger needn't be so important about his river, as

if he owned it. "And it hasn't any mountains, either."

"Well, it has islands—a thousand or so," said Roger.

"What's an island?" cried Marjory, stamping her foot.

"Stop that," cried Roger. "You mustn't ever stamp your foot in a boat, Marjory. Don't you know you might tip us over?"

Marjory hadn't felt so much like the little old Marjory, who used often to stamp and cry, in a long, long time. It was a lucky thing that just then the *Water Lily* sighted the landing for Riverside. Roger brought the boat up skillfully, jumped out, and tied it. Marjory hopped out and they went, red-cheeked and cross, to one of the little tables.

The table was in the coolest place. The ice-cream was delicious. But it didn't taste

good to Marjory. And Roger's head ached. They didn't say much. When they had finished, Marjory went to a little stand near by and bought some cookies.

"What do you want those sticky things for?" asked Roger, as they set out again for the boat.

"They're for Molly," said Marjory. "She likes cookies."

Back in the boat, Marjory saw that Roger was trying to row across the stream. It was wide and deep here and the current seemed swift and strong.

"What are you doing?" she cried.

"I'm going over to rest in the shade," said Roger. "It's hours before supper-time."

"Oh, please don't," begged Marjory, much distressed. "It isn't safe—I know it isn't. Wesley says there's an undertow to this river."

"What's that?" scoffed Roger.

"I don't know," said Marjory, "but it sounds dreadful. Do please let's go home, Roger."

Roger was finding the *Water Lily* rather hard to guide across stream.

"We'll go on upstream a little way till we come to a nice cool spot. I'm going to rest somewhere before I row back."

The current swept them back to the side of the river. Roger pulled away at the oars. The river grew narrower. The shores were heavily wooded.

"Here's a good place," he said at last. He brought the *Water Lily* into a cove, where the trees grew thick and dark down to the very edge of the water. He fastened her to a moss-covered stump and led the way through vines and underbrush. In a few minutes they came to a little hollow

that looked cool. They both sank down on the moss. It wasn't cool at all. It was hot and sultry. There were swarms of gnats and mosquitoes.

Marjory didn't like it. Somehow, she didn't like anything this afternoon.

"Let's go," she said, after a few minutes of fighting off mosquitoes.

"You'd be tired," said Roger, "if you'd rowed that heavy old boat. Leave me alone, can't you?"

Marjory wandered off by herself. Anything was better than sitting still when you felt so uncomfortable inside. She went down nearer the river where the trees weren't so thick. The air was very close. There was a far-off rumble that wasn't the river's voice. Looking up, Marjory saw that the sky was dark with clouds.

"Oh, Roger," she cried breathlessly, hur-

rying back to him, "it's going to storm—the sky's dreadfully black! Do let's hurry and get home!"

Roger rolled over. Just at that minute, the leaves overhead stirred a little. The sound of thunder was coming nearer and nearer.

"It won't last long," he said, getting to his feet. "Honest it won't, Margie. I've been out in mountain-storms before. We'll just have to wait till it's over."

"Not out here in the woods?" cried Marjory. "Couldn't we get home if we hurried?"

"Glad I'm not a girl," said Roger. "Afraid of thunder-storms."

"I'm not afraid of thunder-storms," said Marjory, "not a bit, when I'm home. But I don't like it out here."

"It would be heaps worse on the river,"

said Roger. "Besides, this will be over in a minute. Gee—here it comes!"

The storm was right upon them. There was a sharp flash of lightning, followed almost at once by a deafening peal of thunder which rolled and rolled about, echoing from one hill to another. The next minute, the woods were swept by a mighty wind which tore and whipped them and seemed to try to lay them flat. The river ruffled and seemed to flow upstream for a minute. Then down came a deluge of rain.

The children crouched miserably under the trees. Roger forgot to be cross.

"It's almost over—honest, Margie," he said.

It was. There were only a few sharp flashes of lightning, answered by quick crashing thunder. The ground under the trees was scarcely wet before the wind died

"THE CHILDREN CROUCHED MISERABLY UNDER THE TREES."

down as suddenly as it had come up, there was a quick pelting of raindrops in a hurry to be gone, a last long roar of departing thunder—then out flashed the sun.

"There, that's over," said Roger. "Didn't I tell you so, Margie? Now, we'll go home as fast as ever you like."

They couldn't go fast enough for Marjory. She was first at the river bank. Everything sparkled with raindrops.

"Where's the boat?" she cried, staring at the old mossy stump.

At the same minute, Roger shouted,

"The boat, Margie—see, the wind's taken the boat!"

It was plain that the *Water Lily* hadn't waited to take on her crew and passenger. All by herself, with the help of the wind, she had set sail. There she was, far away down stream, bobbing good-by to the two

shipwrecked little folks on the edge of the woods.

"What shall we do?" cried Marjory. "Oh, Roger, what shall we do?"

"Keep still," said Roger sharply. "I'm trying to think."

He stood still a minute gazing after the departing boat. His scowl was deep and dark.

"We're on our own side of the river, that's one good thing," he said at last. "So far as I can see, all we've got to do is to follow the river back to The Pines. That's easy."

Marjory set out bravely, tramping along back of Roger. They went for some distance, the river leading them, through underbrush and a low growth of timber. But by and by, they came to a place where, not being a river, they couldn't slip through.

"There goes the *Water Lily,*" cried Marjory.

Far away, down the bright stream on its way back to The Willows, went the *Water Lily.*

"I don't see it," said Roger, impatiently, shading his eyes with his hand.

"Well, it's gone now," said Marjory. "What shall we do next, Roger?"

They sat down to think things over. The river was bright in the late afternoon sun. Much of the heat had gone with the storm. Warm, wet, earthy smells were everywhere.

"We can eat Molly's cookies," said Marjory, opening the sticky bag. "So we won't starve."

"We won't starve," said Roger. But he took a cooky and munched away on it.

"Do you think Wesley will come for us?" asked Marjory.

"He'll find the boat is gone, of course," said Roger. "But he won't know which way it went, or anything, Margie. So, maybe we'd better not expect him too much."

"What shall we do then?" cried Marjory.

"We'll find a trail," said Roger. "Trails always lead somewhere."

But the paths they found seemed going nowhere in particular. They tangled and twisted and brought the children back where they'd started from. When, after a long tramp, they found themselves back in the place where they'd eaten the cookies, they sat down to rest again. The river was bright with sunset color now.

"What will the Grandmas say?" cried Marjory.

Roger's face was white. His eyes looked dark and tired.

"We'll try again," he said. "It won't be dark for ever so long, Margie."

They set out again. By and by, amongst all the baffling paths that led nowhere, they stumbled into one that seemed to know where it was going and to keep on going there. The woods began to grow shadowy.

"But it really isn't dark," said Roger. "See the red in the sky."

"That's right back of the old willow," said Marjory, with a little tremble in her voice. "Oh, Roger, I wish we hadn't come."

With all his stubborn little heart, Roger wished so, too. But he wasn't quite ready to say so.

"I've slept out in the woods with Dick," he said. "It isn't half bad."

Maybe it wouldn't be bad to sleep in the woods when you were out camping and knew where you were and every one else knew, too. But when **you** were just plain lost—that was a different matter. But Marjory didn't say anything. She marched sturdily along beside Roger when she could, back of him when the path was too narrow for two.

"Are we going up a mountain?" she asked by and by, wearily.

"There aren't any real mountains here," said Roger. "These are just foothills. Gee, you ought to climb a real mountain, Margie."

"I don't want to," said Marjory.

The darkness came down. They didn't talk any more. But they took hold of hands and plodded on.

The last streak of scarlet died out of the

west. It was twilight outside of the woods. Inside, it was quite dark. Strange winged things brushed their faces. There were new strange sounds, too, of little scrambling feet and timid wild voices. Some of the little wood-folks were hurrying home. Others were going out hunting. Still, the path climbed the hill. Still, Marjory and Roger, hand in hand, climbed with it.

"We'll just have to stop," said Roger at last; "it's too dark to see any longer."

"Oh, don't let's stop," cried Marjory. "Let's keep going as long as the path does. Please, Roger."

Roger stumbled on a few steps. He ran into a tree and bumped his poor head.

"I can't go any farther—honest, I can't, Margie," he said. "Let's stop right here and rest awhile. Maybe the moon will come up by and by."

Marjory stopped short. Her eyes peered through the gathering darkness on all sides. In front of them, it seemed a little brighter and there were fewer trees. She stumbled along a few steps.

"It's all cleared out just ahead, Roger," she cried. "And there's some sort of a building. There's something red on the porch. It's—it's—Roger Kent, it's Good Times Camp!"

CHAPTER IX

GRANNY TAKES A RIDE

CELIA, Wesley, and the thunder-storm reached The Willows at about the same minute that sultry August afternoon. Celia dashed to the great willow, caught up Marjory's book and cushion, and scurried up the steps of the porch just as the rain came.

She was putting down windows on the storm-side of the house, when Granny called.

"Send the children up to me," she said.

"Aren't they there?" cried Celia. She had supposed, of course, the children had taken shelter in Granny's room.

Granny didn't hear, and Celia went on closing windows. As she went into the liv-

ing-room, Grandma Beach said it was draughty and asked Celia to close the door. Aunt Eunice said it was close and would she please leave the door open. Perhaps, because she could hear them, Aunt Eunice always liked thunder-storms.

Marjory and Roger weren't anywhere in the house, Celia decided. They must have run into the barn. Celia hurried through the yard, where wet grass and leaves were already sparkling with returning sunshine.

"Miss Margaret," she called, "Miss Margaret."

As Marjory was, at this very minute, standing disconsolately on the shore of the river watching the *Water Lily* bob out of sight, it's no wonder she didn't hear Celia.

From the barn, Celia ran to The Pines. She didn't telephone because she didn't want to upset the Grandmas.

"They aren't here," said pretty Cousin Sally. She smiled at Celia from clouds of motoring veil. She had just come in from a ride. "Our ride was spoiled by the storm," she said. "And now it's too late to start out again."

"But they must be," said Celia, anxiously. "I'll just look around a little, please, Mrs. Carr."

"Oh, if you like," said Sally Carr. "I don't keep much watch of Roger. He's quite big enough to look out for himself, and the little girl, too."

No amount of looking about found any trace of the children. The other children said Roger hadn't been there all the afternoon. But Sally was still quite undisturbed.

"Perhaps they went for a walk," she suggested.

"It was too hot," said Celia. "That's why Wesley and I didn't take them to town with us."

"Didn't they take the pony-cart?" asked Sally. "You never can tell what children will take it into their heads to do, my good woman."

Celia didn't like being called a good woman. She hurried back to The Willows. As she went into the barn for another look, she heard Molly's eager neigh, so she knew the pony was there. And Marjory's new driving-gloves and her hat were on the seat of the cart.

"I'll harness you, Molly," said Celia. "Then, if they aren't here in half an hour, I'll start out to look them up."

Just then Wesley came into the barn.

"Celia," he said slowly, "the boat's gone. It might have washed away, but I tied it

myself, and it doesn't seem just likely."

After that, there was confusion enough in The House of the Grandmothers. Celia called up The Pines. Mrs. Carr still wouldn't worry. Roger was used to boats. They would be quite all right. Mr. Spicer would watch for them, and when they came, she'd just keep Margaret for dinner.

But in The House of the Grandmothers, no one thought anything about eating. Grandma Beach walked from room to room, grim and silent. Aunt Eunice wept. Celia stood at the telephone asking everywhere in Glenmore if anything had been seen of the two children. Wesley borrowed a boat and set out down the river.

By and by word came from Riverside that two children had been there alone before the storm came up. No one knew whether they came by road or river. The

boy was tall and the girl a little golden-haired thing. She had left a small beaded purse at the candy stand. It had been kept for her.

When this news had been shouted into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet, she wept all over again.

"Her little birthday purse," she mourned. "To think she may never need it again."

"Be quiet, Eunice," said Grandma Beach.

The sky blazed with sunset. It began to grow dark. Celia made tea for the Grandmas. Granny was out in the old willow and wouldn't come in for any. Celia carried it to her there.

When Wesley came back, towing the *Water Lily,* it was quite dark. He had found the boat stranded on a tiny island below The Pines.

He and another man started out again at

once to search the shores of the river. They were very silent as they went away. Mr. Spicer and others would join them at The Pines, they told Celia.

Celia could stand it no longer.

"I'm going to look, myself, with Molly," she cried. "You can answer the 'phone, Mrs. Beach."

But when Celia went into the barn, this time, there was no welcoming neigh from friendly little Molly. And her stall was empty. Then Celia saw that the cart was gone, too. The old horses had been taken out earlier in the evening to help in the search of the roads.

"Some one's borrowed Molly, too," thought Celia. "Well, I'll go on foot. Maybe, I'll find them at The Pines. Maybe, I'll meet them just coming home. Maybe—"

Celia didn't finish that last "Maybe." There was a brisk rattle of wheels on the long bridge across the river. The pony-cart, with hungry little Molly tugging at her bit, came flying across it, turned into The Willows, passed Celia, and went on toward the porch.

"Whoa!" cried a little voice brimful of business.

In the light from the windows, Celia saw Granny in the cart. A little girl scrambled down from it. For just a minute, Celia thought it was Marjory. But this little girl was taller. And she wore a dark suit and hat. Wherever Marjory was, she was in white and bare-headed. This must be one of the little summer-girls from The Pines.

"Has Margie been found?" she cried.

"Not yet," said Celia.

"Granny and I will find her," cried the

little girl. "You're Celia, aren't you? Well, don't you worry, Celia, we'll find her and bring her back all right. You just tell the Grandmas so. We won't be very long."

There was something so sure in the little girl's voice that, for a minute, Celia felt sure, too.

"I wonder who she is," she said to herself, as she hurried back to the house to see if anything had been heard by 'phone.

Meantime, out of the yard went the pony-cart, the little girl, and Granny. Celia could hear Molly's unwilling hoofs as they broke into a trot.

Roger and Marjory sank down wearily on the porch of Good Times Camp. There was the balsam-couch with its gay blanket and cushions. There was the hammock. Inside, the little spider-legged table and

chairs waited for them. Over all, fell the soft friendly darkness.

"It's almost as good as getting home," said Roger.

"If the Grandmas only knew we were here," said Marjory, wistfully. "Can't we hurry right on, Roger? We know the way now."

"We couldn't go all that long woods road in the dark," said Roger.

"Let's try," pleaded Marjory.

"Honest, I can't," said Roger. "And we'd only get lost again, Margie."

Roger's voice was so tired 'Marjory hadn't the heart to say anything more. But she looked longingly at the road that led away down the side of the hill.

"People who camp out usually have a bonfire," said Roger, after a minute.

"It would be comfy," said Marjory.

"We said we wouldn't," said Roger. "So, maybe we'd better not. We've done enough things we ought not to, I guess, Margie."

"Yes," said Marjory soberly.

They decided they'd eat the rest of the cookies. And Marjory remembered some crackers and jam they'd left in the cupboard of the camp. They brought them out on the porch and ate them, too.

"Let's sleep outside," said Roger, "as if we were really camping out."

"I like it better outside," said Marjory; "it seems nearer home, anyway."

"Let's have some music," said Roger. "Then we'll go to bed. It gets light ever so early now, and just as soon as it does, we'll hurry home. We'll be there to breakfast, Margie."

Marjory nodded.

"And—you needn't worry about the Grandmas," said Roger quite unexpectedly. "I'll tell them 'twas all my fault."

"It—wasn't," said Marjory, "I'll tell them it wasn't, Roger."

Roger put in a record in the dark. It turned out to be one of the gayest in his collection. It was strange enough, sitting up there in the little woods camp on the side of the mountain, with the wild gay notes leaping out through the darkness. The moon was so surprised, when she came out, that she peered down through the treetops to see what on earth was going on. And she smiled in friendly fashion when she saw the two desolate little campers on the porch of Good Times Camp. Somehow, her twinkle and the gay tones of the victrola helped cheer things up a little.

"Here's Granny's tune," said Roger, look-

ing over the records in a moonlit corner of the room. "We'll sit up till that's through. Then we'll go to bed, Margie."

The notes of Money Musk tripped in stately fashion through the moonlight. All the little wood-echoes that lived anywhere around caught them up and carried them away and away through the woods and down the long, dark, winding road. A pony clip-clapping up the hill in the most disconsolate fashion, pricked up her ears at the sound, then set off at her best pace.

Marjory had the balsam-couch for her bed. Roger covered her with the red and yellow blanket. Then he crept into her hammock.

Marjory was asleep almost as soon as her head touched the little red pillows that Granny's loving hands had made.

But she roused up because a voice that

sounded like Roger's, said from the hammock,

"You're a regular brick, Margie. Most girls would have cried. You are the first girl I ever liked."

"Say it again," cried Marjory, sitting up. "Oh, did you say it, Roger? Or did I dream it?"

But Roger was asleep. Marjory could see his dark head, all curly from the heat, against the red pillow.

"He couldn't have said anything like that," said Marjory.

The next minute, or several minutes later, Marjory found herself sitting up again and listening for some sound that had wakened her. The moon was higher now, and it was almost as bright as day in the little clearing. What was that sound—far off and faint, but coming nearer, nearer, nearer, like

the sound of quick little hoofs on a stony road? "Clip-clap, clip-clap," nearer and nearer it came.

"I must be dreaming," thought Marjory again.

"Clip-clap, clip-clap, rattle, rattle, rattle," across the bit of a bridge, along the stones, came the quick dainty little steps and the sound of cart-wheels.

"Roger," cried Marjory. "Oh, Roger, do wake up—they're coming for us with Molly!"

Roger's dark head came up quickly. Next minute, straight into the white patch of moonlight, came a spotted little horse and a cart. The pony neighed in hungriest fashion. She always found cookies or sugar at this stopping-place as she well knew. On the seat of the cart sat a small, straight figure with silver hair.

"Margie," quavered a sweet old voice.

"Oh, Granny! Granny! Granny!" cried Marjory. She was halfway to the cart. Roger was close behind her. Then another small figure that was with Granny in the cart, sprang over the wheel. This last figure fairly flew to meet Marjory.

"Margie!" cried a joyous little voice.

"Lissy—Lissy Penny!" cried Marjory. She would have fallen down on the pine-needles if Lissy's two sturdy little arms hadn't been tight around her. "Where—where—where—did you come from?"

"I knew we'd find you—Granny, Molly and I," cried Lissy. She never let go of Marjory for a minute. "Now, hop right into the cart. Roger, too. We'll all manage, somehow. And we'll explain as we go along."

CHAPTER X

TWO LITTLE GRANDDAUGHTERS

ROGER dropped down wearily in the back of the little cart. Marjory cuddled down between Granny and Lissy. It was so good to be there, with Granny's arm fast around her, and Lissy's eager voice talking to her, that she didn't care much, just then, how it all had come about.

But Lissy did.

"I just had to come, Margie," she cried. "Papa Penny says he knew I would, give me time. And Doris was all settled—it's the dearest little house, just like a doll's house. I just had to know the Grandmas and Roger and Molly. Papa Penny wrote

to Celia to expect me this evening and I came every bit of the way alone. Then there wasn't any one to meet me at Ridgewood, and a man said the stage had gone, so I just decided I'd walk. 'Twasn't far, and I left my suitcase at the station. The stage will bring it in the morning. All of a sudden, coming along by the river, didn't I see a dear little horse and a cart? And didn't I just know it was Molly? And then there was Granny. And I knew her, too, the minute I saw her. But all she would say over and over was, "Margie is lost. Margie is lost. Molly and Granny must find her." I knew she wouldn't find you going toward Ridgewood, 'cause if you'd been anywhere around there, I'd have seen you. So I hopped in and turned around, and we came back to the Grandmas' House just as fast as ever we could. We

stopped to tell Celia I'd find you. And I did, Margie. I did. We all heard the victrola 'way down the road, and how we did hurry."

Lissy squeezed Marjory's hand with her free one. Molly decided it was quite time for that long-delayed supper of hers. She broke into one of her fastest runs, and away they flew! They went down hill so fast that Marjory clutched Roger by his hair for fear he'd spill out and get lost all over again.

They rounded the corner to the Glenmore road in fine style, and drew up with a breathless flourish at The Pines.

"Here they are," said Cousin Sally's cool sweet voice. "You are very naughty children to have made every one so much trouble."

The summer people all crowded down to

receive Roger. His face was red and cross. He had scarcely a word for any one.

"The boy's tired out," said Granny unexpectedly. "Don't ask questions, and don't scold. Feed him, and put him to bed."

Molly didn't wait to see what happened to Roger. She dashed ahead to The Willows. Nor did she stop at the porch at Celia's excited call. She bore her load straight to the barn and into the barn. She would have gone on into her stall, had not its door been too narrow for the cart.

Wesley came from somewhere to look after Molly. Celia was there, too, and Aunt Eunice sobbed. Lights bobbed about. Marjory found herself where she had never been before—in Grandma Beach's arms. And they were like the arms of a story-book Grandma. The kisses on her face were like story-book Grandma's kisses. And when

she tried to say how naughty she'd been and how sorry she was for all the trouble and worry she'd caused, Grandma kissed her again, and said something like, "Don't talk about it to-night."

Marjory was too tired and sleepy to talk about anything. She fell asleep trying to eat bread and milk. When she woke up, next morning, she didn't remember going to bed at all. But there she was. She lay still for a minute trying to think what was dream and what was real. She had really been lost—she was sure of that. And she must have been found. But had Lissy really found her? She raised up carefully. There, on the other pillow was Lissy's own red-brown head. Lissy wasn't a dream.

Marjory drew a long happy breath over that. Then very softly she crept out of bed. She put on her pink bathgown and pink

slippers. She pit-patted to Grandma's room. It was cool with its blinds closed against the morning sun. The bed was made. Aunt Eunice's room was just as empty and orderly.

Marjory heard voices on the porch. She hurried downstairs.

All three Grandmas were on the porch. Grandma Beach was knitting. Aunt Eunice was counting beads.

"He seems such a nice little boy," Granny's voice was saying. "I'm sure, Margaret, he didn't mean to do wrong about the boat."

"Grandma Beach," said Marjory from the doorway, "it was just as much my fault as it was Roger's that we went off in the boat yesterday, and got lost, and everything. Please don't blame him. You can punish me any way you want to."

Something left in Grandma Beach's eyes made Marjory think of the story-book Grandma of last night. But her voice was almost as usual.

"Roger says that it is his fault, Margaret," she said. "It was a dreadful time for us all. And it's quite remarkable that Granny isn't dead after that ride. She thinks you've suffered enough, yourself, so you won't do such a thing again. Perhaps she's right."

"Oh, I'll never do it again," said Marjory. "Of course not, Grandma Beach. I wouldn't have gone, yesterday, only—" Marjory stopped. She didn't know how to tell Grandma Beach about the two Marjories. She'd tell Granny sometime. Granny would understand.

"Never mind now," said Grandma Beach. "Run and get dressed."

Halfway upstairs, Marjory heard Grandma Beach call her back.

"Keep the little girl to dinner with you," she said. "Then we'll send her back to The Pines."

"Send her back to The Pines?" cried Marjory.

"She's another little granddaughter," said Granny.

"Granny's confused this morning, Margaret," said Grandma Beach.

"She got over-tired, yesterday, and it's upset her. Of course she knows she's only one granddaughter."

"But she has," cried Marjory, getting close to Grandma Beach, so she would surely hear right. "I've always tried to tell you that, Grandma. And she's come—Lissy's come."

"Who *is* Lissy?" Grandma Beach

dropped her knitting. "And where has she come from? What do you mean, child?"

"Lissy came from The Penny Bank yesterday," said Marjory. "And she started to walk here from Ridgewood, and Granny met her, and they both found me."

"But why was she coming *here?*" demanded Grandma Beach.

"She's our little granddaughter, Margaret," said Granny. "One we didn't know we had—just as I told you."

"She was coming to visit—us," cried Marjory at the same minute.

Grandma Beach stared at Marjory. It was quite clear, now, that she'd never known there was a Lissy till this minute. And that she didn't at all understand and wasn't too well pleased, now.

Just at this minute, in from the kitchen

bustled Celia. She had a letter in her hand. And downstairs, pink-cheeked, and beaming good will to every one, came Lissy, herself.

"What does this all mean?" said Grandma Beach. "Celia, if you know, will you have the goodness to explain. I understood you to say, last night, that this child came from The Pines to help in the search for Margaret."

"I did think so," said Celia. "I asked her if her folks knew where she was, and she said, 'Why, of course.' So, I just tucked her up with Marjory, and 'phoned Mr. Spicer to tell her folks, whoever they were, not to worry about her. But it seems—" Celia hesitated and glanced down at the letter in her hand.

"What does it mean?" said Grandma Beach again.

"It means," cried Lissy, laughing and running straight to Grandma, "that I'm your oldest granddaughter, Grandma Beach."

"Margaret's oldest child was a boy," said Grandma Beach. Her face was white.

"That's John," said Lissy. She spoke out loud and clear so Grandma Beach would be sure to hear everything right this time. "Then I came next. I'm the one you sent for, Grandma Beach. I'm Melissa Maud Penny."

"Then who is Margaret?" cried Grandma Beach. Half unconsciously, maybe, she reached out for Marjory, and held fast to her.

"I'm your next granddaughter," cried Marjory, down on her knees beside Grandma Beach. "I'm just exactly as much your granddaughter as Lissy is."

"She's the other one," shouted Lissy.

Grandma Beach stared from one of her granddaughters to the other.

"There wasn't—another one," she said slowly.

"Oh, yes, there was," said Marjory. "There was me." Marjory was too excited to remember where to use "I" and where to use "me." "Our mother didn't have time to tell you about me, because she died just as soon as I came. And Papa Penny didn't tell you about me, because he gave me away to a Mr. Brook—that's my Daddy, you know—and wasn't to tell any one. We didn't any of us know anything about that till last year—except John and Aunt Melissa. But, you see, Lissy's mother was my mother, so I'm really your granddaughter just as much as she is."

Right here, Granny began talking, too. Aunt Eunice, vexed because she couldn't

hear a word, began asking some one to explain it all to her. Celia took matters into her own hands.

"I've a letter here," she said, "from Mr. Peter Penny. It should have come yesterday before Miss Lissy did. But it didn't for some reason. The children have told you everything just as it is. But I'll read it."

It was a long, long letter, telling everything that Marjory and Lissy already knew, and some things they didn't. It told all about Marjory's plan, and how the two fathers had decided to let it work out for itself. Celia left out one sentence toward the end. It said, "When the Grandmas find they have two granddaughters instead of one, I'm sure they'll be twice as happy." Celia wasn't just sure about this, yet.

When the letter was read, Grandma

Beach gathered up her knitting, and went into the house without a word for either granddaughter. Celia sent Marjory upstairs to get dressed, and Lissy to help her. Then she read the letter again into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet. Granny kept chuckling away to herself, "Two granddaughters instead of one." *She* was twice as happy, Celia thought.

"Maybe she'll send me straight back home," said Lissy soberly, as the two little girls went upstairs. "She doesn't like two granddaughters, Margie."

"No one could help liking you for a granddaughter, Lissy," cried Marjory. "You're a much nicer one than I am. And, oh, Lissy, it's going to be just splendid having you here!"

"Maybe I sha'n't stay," said Lissy.

Dinner was a strange silent meal. Aunt

Eunice smiled timidly at her new little grand-niece. Granny beamed at both her great granddaughters. But Grandma Beach was stiffer and straighter than Marjory had ever seen her. Lissy and Marjory couldn't help smiling at each other, now and then, across the silent table. It was nice being together again even in a House of Grandmothers where there was room for only one granddaughter.

"Maybe she'll like me after a little," said Lissy anxiously, as the two little girls went, arm in arm, to the willow-nest. "She's got to, that's all, Margie. And she's got to like my father, too."

"She will," said Margie easily. "When she's queer, Celia says it's just her way. Celia knows all about her, Lissy."

That night, when the two little girls were going to bed, and Marjory reached up her

cheek for Grandma's kiss, Lissy put hers up, too.

"Good night, Melissa," said Grandma Beach. Then quite suddenly she added,

"When I wrote and asked you to come to us, Melissa, why didn't you come?"

"I didn't want to," said Lissy. "Oh, that sounds dreadfully impolite, Grandma. But—I didn't. And Margie did."

"But why didn't you want to come, Melissa?" said Grandma Beach.

Poor Lissy. She looked at Marjory standing between Granny and Aunt Eunice, with Celia in the background. Then she looked up at Grandma Beach.

"Must I tell you?" she said almost in tears.

"I made her," cried Marjory, trying to help. "I didn't think you'd care which one you had. Neither did Daddy nor Papa

Penny. And I tried to tell you, but I couldn't. And Celia said it didn't matter."

"Why didn't you want to come, Melissa?" said Grandma. She paid no attention to Marjory.

Lissy's cheeks were red. But her honest gray eyes met Grandma's squarely.

"Because you didn't—like my father!" she cried.

"What made you say that?" cried Marjory, when the two little girls were safe in their own room.

"It was the truth," cried Lissy. "And Grandma made me say it. Oh, dear, Margie, I don't believe I can stay here, even if father does want me to."

"Wait a little, Miss Melissa," said Celia, who had just come in to see if the children were all right. "I guess you pleased

Grandma Beach answering her just the way you did. It was just exactly what she would have done herself. Just wait a little, and forget all about it."

CHAPTER XI

THE CRIMSON RAMBLER

BREAKFAST, next morning, was like many others Marjory had known. After the usual good mornings, Grandma read the paper into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet and they both talked over the news. Granny chuckled to herself every few minutes. She couldn't have been chuckling over the news which was anything but good. By the way she twinkled her eyes at them, both little girls knew she was laughing because she had two little great-granddaughters instead of one.

"My, but it's quiet eating that way," said Lissy, as the little girls went out on the sunny porch after breakfast. "What would

the Grandmas say to one of the Penny meals —boys all talking at once, and Trixy giggling?"

"We'll go down by the willow," said Marjory. "We can make all the noise we want to there, and maybe Roger will come over."

Marjory ran to get the red cushions. When she came back, she couldn't find Lissy anywhere. But from the kitchen, came the sound of splashing dish-water and a gay little voice. Marjory ran through the dining-room and opened the door. Lissy had on Celia's gingham apron and was washing dishes.

"You wipe them, Margie," she cried, as Marjory appeared. "Then Celia can go right to her jellying."

Marjory caught up a wiping-towel.

"It's 'most as good as The Penny Bank,"

she cried, beginning on the silver. "Why didn't I think to help Celia before?"

"I can't feel at home, somehow, without my dishes to wash," laughed Lissy. "But aren't these the loveliest dishes, Margie?"

After the dishes were done, Lissy suggested that, as Celia was still jellying, they make their own bed. Then they ran up to make Granny's for her. Then they went out into the garden and picked raspberries for dinner.

In a week, Lissy was almost as busy in The House of the Grandmothers as she always was in The Penny Bank. Besides rides with Molly, visits to Good Times Camp, boat-rides with Wesley, plenty of play under the old willow, and wonderful hours in Granny's room, she found time to wash dishes, sweep kitchen and porches, dust two or three rooms, and make beds. She

held Grandma's wool. She sorted beads for Aunt Eunice. She read to Granny. She helped bring in fruit and vegetables from the garden. She learned to harness Molly all by herself. She fed her and groomed her. No wonder she couldn't find time to get lonesome.

When she worked about the house, almost always she sang in a clear high voice. Sometimes it was one of the songs Miss Doris had taught her in the little schoolhouse at Brookside. Sometimes it was a victrola selection. Sometimes it was one of Aunt Melissa's hymns. Whatever it was, her work was done in time to it.

"Hurry the dishes this morning," said Marjory one day when Lissy had been a granddaughter more than a week. "Grandma says we may go over to The Pines."

"Well," said Lissy, while the hot water splashed from faucet to pan, "don't let me get started on a hymn, then. We'll never get through if I do."

"Try the fastest piece you know," laughed Marjory, jigging about the room with the wiping-towel.

Lissy started in with the dishes and "Yankee Doodle." She splashed and piped shrilly. Marjory hummed softly and kept time with one slippered foot. Suddenly the door opened, and Grandma Beach came in.

"Can't you work without singing, Melissa?" she asked.

"Not so well," said Lissy. "Does it disturb you, Grandma?"

"You're much noisier than Margaret," said Grandma.

Grandma went back to her knitting.

Lissy finished the dishes soberly and slowly. Her cheeks burned.

"It's a good thing you came first, Margie," she said, as the two little girls started out for The Pines. "I am afraid that I don't please Grandma half so well as you do."

"Oh, yes, you do," cried Marjory. She slipped one arm around Lissy. "That's just Grandma's way. She likes you just as well as she does me."

"She doesn't," said Lissy soberly, "and Roger doesn't either."

"Nobody could like me better," cried Marjory.

"Oh, yes, they could," said Lissy, "and they do. I don't wonder, Margie," she added happily. "I like you better, myself."

"Do you?" cried Marjory, surprised.

"Why, I like you ever so much better, Lissy."

They both laughed at this, and forgot about the Grandmas and Roger. Arm in arm, they went along the little street. Suddenly, across the bridge dashed a great red car. It flew along the road, overtaking and passing them all in a breath. It seemed full of bright colors and faces. All at once, it became, too, a mass of waving hands and excited barks and yelps.

"Why, they're stopping," cried Lissy. "Who is it?"

As soon as it could, the red car came to a stop. From one side sprang a tall, handsome boy. From the other a grown-up girl. Both came running back, and with them, getting in their way at nearly every steps, was a fine old dog.

"Why, Nancy Spindle!" cried Lissy, running, herself.

"And Joe and Fritz," cried Margie, keeping up.

Such a load as the Crimson Rambler held. There were Uncle Ben Baker, Nancy Spindle, Joel Bernard, Betty Blake, the Martie Twins, and Fritz. They had come all the way from White Birch Camp, Joe said, as they hurried back. And they were going to stay a week, or so, at The Pines. Reaching and pulling and boosting, in a minute, Marjory and Lissy were packed into the car with the others; every one was talking, including Fritz, who, when he got excited never could remember that he was old, now, and should be dignified.

When they drew up at The Pines, and began to unload themselves and their bag-

gage, it didn't look as if even the big hotel could find room for them all.

Almost at once, Marjory ran to find Roger. He sat all by himself in his shady corner of the porch. His drawing book lay beside him.

"They'll spoil all our good times," he said, sulkily, when Marjory told him who had come. And he quite refused to come and meet the new little folks.

"Oh, do come, Roger," pleaded Marjory.

"You can stay with me," he said.

"I can't now," said Marjory. "You see, they're my friends, and I haven't seen them in ever so long. It wouldn't be polite to leave them, Roger."

"I'm not coming," said Roger firmly.

"I'm sorry," said Marjory. She didn't want to leave Roger all alone away from

the good times. But she couldn't stay with him.

All that lovely afternoon, while the little folks visited the swings, the croquet ground, the tennis-court, and the boat-houses down by the river, Roger sat by himself—a gloomy little figure.

Lissy was so upset that twice she stole away and went to see if she couldn't coax him to join them.

"He says to let him alone," she said the last time she came back, as she met Uncle Ben and the children all coming to rest on the porch.

"What makes him so cross, Margie?"

"Roger's really a very nice boy," said Marjory loyally.

"Poor little chap," said Uncle Ben. He half smiled at the hunched-up little figure. "Guess he doesn't know what a great bunch

of fun this is that I carry about with me in the Crimson Rambler."

"I wish he would come over here," said Betty. "He looks so uncomfy."

"He doesn't like noise," said Marjory.

"Like the Grandmas," said Lissy. "But I never knew a boy before who didn't like noise."

"Nor I," chuckled Nancy Spindle.

"Oh, yes, Nancy, you did—once," said Martin, the boy-twin. "I didn't, when I was little; don't you remember?"

"No one would believe it now, Martie," said Nancy.

"Maybe he isn't well," said Betty. She couldn't keep her eyes off the forlorn little figure.

"He looks well from this distance," said Joe. "I think he's jealous of our taking Margie away from him."

Fritz had been listening soberly, his great eyes going from one to another of the children. Now, he took matters into his own hands just as he had often done for one or another of them. He rose, stretched, then walked slowly across the porch to the small boy in the great chair.

He thrust a curious nose into Roger's limp hand. Roger's other hand came down quickly from his eyes.

"You old beauty," he cried. "Who are you?"

Fritz wagged his tail in friendly fashion. Then he offered his paw. He looked back soberly to Uncle Ben's bunch of little folks. As plainly as a dog could, he said,

"Better come join us."

A minute later, into the surprised group about the steps came Fritz and Roger.

Roger's hand was slipped through Fritz's collar.

"Is he your dog?" he asked Uncle Ben.

"Not altogether," said Uncle Ben, patting Fritz's head. "But sometimes he makes believe he is."

"Yours?" Roger turned to Martin.

"Wish he was," said Martin, shaking his head.

"He belongs to Joe, Roger," said Betty. Her little hand on Fritz's collar touched Roger's hand gently. And she smiled into his strange dark blue eyes. "Where's Joe, Fritz?" she said to the dog.

Fritz scampered straight to the tall, laughing boy on the top step.

"He's mine, all right," said Joe.

"Would you sell him?" cried Roger.

"Sell—Fritz?" said Joe. "Well, I couldn't do that, you know. You couldn't,

yourself, if he was yours and you'd had him almost as long as you could remember, could you?"

"I'd never sell him if he was mine," said Roger. "I've always wanted a dog."

"Help yourself to him while we're here," said Joe, good-naturedly. "He's taken a liking to you—that's easy to see."

Next minute, Roger found himself in the middle of that noisy bunch. Fritz was on one side, Uncle Ben on the other. Just below sat Marjory next to Betty. Roger didn't think, in all his life, he'd ever seen anything quite so lovely as Betty—all of her from her topmost shining curl to the toes of her stout little woods boots. Silent and smiling to herself, she sat in the midst of all the noisy chatter.

"Well, Betty, out with it," teased Joe from the railing of the porch.

"I was thinking," said Betty. "And as usual, Joel Bernard, my thoughts were worth while. First I was thinking about you and how you'd been a circus boy. And about Marjory and how she's been a circus girl. And about Fritz and how he's been a circus dog. And I wondered, now that we're all together, if we couldn't have a circus."

Betty's voice was lost in the shout that went up. Roger forgot he didn't like noise. He shouted with the rest. Nancy was so excited that her eyes fairly snapped in her funny little face.

"I'll make Fritz do some of his tricks," said Joe. "He's lost some of his pep, but he's a pretty good sport yet, aren't you, old chappy?"

Fritz, catching the spirit of the thing, stood on his head with joy. He barked and

capered and upset a chair, and Mr. Spicer came rushing to the door of the office to see what was the matter. Joe had to make Fritz go and lie down.

"I'll dance if you want me to," offered Marjory shyly.

Every one clapped their hands at that.

"I can't do fancy things," said Lissy, "But I'll make some of Aunt Melissa's gingerbread and sell that. There are always things to sell at circuses."

"I'll have a lemonade stand," said Martin. "I'm not fancy either, Lissy."

"What can I do?" cried Martha, his twin. "Can't we do something together, Martie?"

"You can be the fat lady," teased Joe.

"I will, " said Martha accommodatingly. "I am fat, you see," she explained to Marjory and Roger.

"I'd like to be a clown the best of any-

thing," said Nancy Spindle soberly. "But I suppose I'll have to be The Queen of Hearts or something nice and ladylike like that."

"Uncle Ben is appointed manager," said Betty. "Now, that arranges for every one but you and me, Roger."

"I can't do anything," said Roger.

"Oh, yes, you can," said Uncle Ben. "Look up some animals for the menagerie. Fritz is one of the performers and that's quite enough for him."

"You can have some of our cats," said Marjory. "There's quite a family of all-gray kittens in the barn."

"All right," said Roger. "And maybe I can find a goat or something."

"If I had something to ride," mused Betty, "I'd be the equestrienne lady. We really do need one. Remember dear little

Gypsy, Joe, and how I used to ride her?"

"If Molly will do," said Marjory, "I'm just sure Susy would love to have you ride her."

When Betty had heard all about Molly, she was quite sure she'd make a fine steed for the equestrienne lady.

"Won't it be fun?" cried Martha. She hopped up and down till Joe begged her to stop, lest she lose some of the precious fat of the fat lady.

"Where shall we have it?" asked Martin.

"Mr. Spicer says we can have it here in the yard," said Nancy, bustling back from a talk with Mr. Spicer. "He says all the summer folks will want to come to it anyway."

"The Willows would be lovely," said Lissy. "But the Grandmas would never let us have it there. Margie," she cried

suddenly, "will they even let us take part? The Grandmas are so particular," she explained to the others.

"Granny will," said Marjory happily. "Granny isn't particular."

Sometime later, when two breathless little granddaughters poured out the whole plan and begged to take part in the circus, Granny answered every one of Grandma's objections.

"If Ben Baker's children can take part, I guess our little grand-girls can," she said.

"A circus!" said Grandma. "I never did such a thing in my life, and you know it, Mother."

"You ran away once to go to one, if I remember rightly," said Granny. "And got spanked for it afterward with my slipper."

Lissy and Marjory tried not to laugh.

But it did seem funny to think of Grandma's running away to anything—and funnier yet to think of her getting a spanking, especially with Granny's bit of a slipper.

"I'll help you dress up," said Granny, quite as if everything was decided. "There are costumes in the chests just right for circus-performers to wear."

"May I dance, Grandma?" said Marjory.

"Can you dance, Margaret?" asked Grandma.

"She dances beau-ti-ful-ly," cried Lissy. "She can be a fairy or a humming-bird, or most anything, Grandma."

"Why did you never tell me this before?" said Grandma.

"I didn't think about it," said Marjory.

"Dance for me," said Grandma Beach, quite unexpectedly.

Marjory lifted her arms, poised on the tips of her toes, and almost at once, she became a bright butterfly skimming up and down the old porch, pausing now and then above a make-believe flower.

Grandma's eyes never left the small flying figure. Her face softened strangely. When Marjory stopped, breathless, she said,

"Did you know your mother danced, Margaret?"

"Granny said so," said Marjory.

"On this same porch, up and down this very lawn, many and many a time," said Grandma gently. Her voice was all at once the voice of the story-book grandmother Marjory loved. Lissy, too, caught its new tenderness.

"I can't do pretty things like Marjory," she said briskly. "So, Grandma, please

may I make some gingerbread to sell at the circus?"

"Can you make gingerbread?" asked Grandma.

"Father says it's 'most as good as Aunt Melissa's," said Lissy, "but, of course, it isn't really. It tastes good to him because I make it."

"Lissy can cook and bake and do everything like that," said Marjory.

"I used to when I was her age," said Grandma. "But your mother couldn't. Ask Celia to give you the little tins I used to bake in, Melissa," she added.

"Oh, Grandma Beach," cried Lissy, "I do think you are splendid."

Granny chuckled to herself. As they all went in to supper, she said,

"Two little granddaughters will make a real Grandma out of you yet, Margaret!"

CHAPTER XII

THE CIRCUS

NEXT morning, soon after breakfast, Joe arrived at The Willows. With him, at the end of his leash, was Fritz. He looked like a boat with the wind all taken out of its sails. He hung his head. His tail drooped between his legs.

"He's in disgrace," said Joe after Marjory and Lissy had introduced him to the Grandmas. "He made so much noise, last night, Mr. Spicer says he can't stay another at the hotel. He thought perhaps you'd let him sleep here."

Grandma Beach didn't like dogs. Aunt Eunice shivered at sight of one. But

Granny already had Fritz at her side, telling him what a fine old fellow he was.

"Of course, he may stay here," she answered Joe. "I'd like to keep him always."

From that minute, Fritz took up his abode at The House of the Grandmothers. He followed Granny about like a shadow. Grandma Beach forgot she didn't like dogs, and Aunt Eunice stopped shivering to laugh at his funny tricks. Every one on the place fell in love with him except the gray mother-cat, Pussy Willow. She moved her family to the highest loft of the barn, and set up housekeeping there out of his reach.

The circus was to be held on Tuesday. The morning before, the girls were all busy on the front porch making costumes. The Grandmas were helping. Roger and Martin were out placarding the town. Roger

had made some really good posters. The one of Fritz was so life-like Lissy said, "He'd know himself, if he saw it." Joe had taken Fritz to The Pines to put him through his tricks. Fritz had gone away sulkily. He wanted to stay at The House of the Grandmothers.

Suddenly to the little workers on the porch came the thud of flying feet. Around the corner, up the steps, into their midst, bounded the dog. He flew to Granny and crouched down beside her. The next minute Joe arrived, out of breath and patience, as well.

"I can't do one thing with him," he said, disgustedly. He dropped down on a pile of gay costumes and fanned himself with a big poster which, later, was to go up on the gate of The Willows. "He won't do a single trick at The Pines. He just turns

tail and runs for here. I chased after him and brought him back there three times. He'll never do a single trick there. He'll spoil the whole circus."

"Let him practice here," said Nancy.

"Yes, and then have him insist upon doing his stunts here to-morrow," said Joe. "I know Fritz! Look at him," he added, laughing in spite of himself. "He knows every word I say."

Fritz was sitting up stiff and straight in front of Grandma Beach, his naughty head on one side, and his paw held out.

"He's asking to have the circus here," said Joe.

Betty looked out across the smooth sweep of green grass to the old willow and the river sparkling beyond.

"I don't wonder," she said softly. "It would be beautiful here."

Lissy and Marjory looked at each other. Then they looked at Grandma Beach. She didn't seem to have heard a word. But she held out her hand to Fritz.

"Could we?" began Marjory, at the same minute Lissy said, "Couldn't we?"

"What?" asked Grandma. She stared from one to the other of her small eager granddaughters.

"Have the circus on our lawn?" they cried together.

"I was just wondering why you didn't," said Grandma Beach. "It would be a good place."

Such a shout as went up from the old porch. Fritz lost his head completely, and began going through his tricks at once.

"It was because Joe and Betty both wanted it," said Lissy afterward to Marjory.

"I think it was Fritz," said Marjory.

It was neither Betty nor Joe nor Fritz. It was the memory of a little figure that once, long ago, had flitted like a sunbeam through Grandma's life. It was the thought of another little figure, so like the first, that was slowly bringing back sunshine and song to the grim old house.

At one o'clock, next day, the parade started out from The Willows. At its head was the band. It was Martin with an old accordeon Marjory had found among Granny's things. Martin had never played an accordeon before, but, as Uncle Ben said, that made the music more like real circus music.

Back of Martin, on Molly, came Betty. She wore a skirt of crimson satin. Over her dainty white blouse, she had slipped a

"THE PARADE STARTED OUT FROM THE WILLOWS."

little blue coat spangled with silver. She wore a crimson tam on her head. Molly didn't just like the skirt. But she did like Betty. She kept turning her curious little head to look at her. Sometimes, to get a better view, she stopped short. You couldn't blame her. But her sudden stops did somewhat annoy Roger. Roger had the calf in charge which he had borrowed from the hotel farm. The calf didn't like parades and pulled back while Roger pulled ahead. Behind Roger, marched Lissy and Marjory. They carried a big basket made comfy with red cushions. In this, rode Pussy Willow and her family. Pussy Willow was troubled. Her half grown kittens seemed fond of circus life and anxious to become trapeze performers. They climbed to the top of the basket, sometimes several of them at once. So far, when they

sprawled back, they sprawled into the basket, not out of it.

Behind the kittens, came Martha. It had been decided by the whole troupe that she, being the Fat Lady, should ride. At first, no fit conveyance could be found. At last, Roger had discovered a goat. The goat had been hitched to a cart. And in this cart rode Martha. She was gorgeous in yellow satin borrowed from Granny. Her turnout was advertised as "The Lady and the Tiger." The Tiger rode beside her in a large cage that had once been the home of a parrot. He was only the hotel cat, but he looked almost fierce enough for his part. He liked neither the gray mother-cat ahead of him, nor Fritz, who yelped and barked close behind. No wonder, Martha, who also managed the goat, looked as anxious as Pussy Willow herself.

Joe, last in the procession, with the performing dog, didn't have an easy time. Fritz could see the tempting kittens crawling up the basket. And he could hear the growls of the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Nancy was the daintiest, most lady-like clown any circus had ever known. She wore a full skirted gown with red hearts sewed on it. She had a funny mask. She nipped here, there, and everywhere, trying to keep on Granny's high-heeled red slippers which were too small for her.

To the music of the accordeon, amid the applause of the bystanders, the parade passed down the one street of Glenmore from The Willows to The Pines. The calf balked, the tiger arched his back and spit and growled, Pussy Willow was three times her usual size, Fritz kept Joe on the run. But, on the whole, it was a triumphal

progress. It went around the hotel, and came back into the road, headed, now, toward The Willows. Then it was that unexpected things happened.

They began with the smallest of the Pussy Willow family. Somehow, in an unwatched second, he managed to miss being pulled or pushed back into the basket. He reached the top, poised perilously on its edge, and pitched over into the road.

He might have been a bomb. Like a flash, Fritz strained to the end of his stout leash. The calf gave a great sprawling leap, lunged against Molly, who promptly kicked up her heels and ran. Tiger plunged violently forward and went, cage and all, into the dust of the road. He tore and scratched until the door of his cage came open, and he was only a dark streak

across the distance. The goat turned himself, the cart, and the Fat Lady around, and started back toward his home on the mountainside.

For awhile there was great confusion. The clown and the band forgot their parts and started in hot pursuit of the Fat Lady. But the sight of Pussy Willow and her small kitten, both with bristling backs and arching tails, so discouraged Fritz that he slunk to the rear of the procession. Roger clung fast to the calf, and he soon quieted down. Betty came galloping back on Molly, her cheeks all roses and dimples. Some one at the hotel stopped the goat and with the help of the Clown and the Band, he was returned to his rightful place. Tiger couldn't be found. But the rest of the procession hurried on to The Willows. And every one in Glenmore, who could pos-

sibly get off, followed to attend the performance.

While the gingerbread and lemonade stand was being made ready, the circus-goers had a chance to look at the menagerie. Roger had it in charge. The goat, tied to a tree, had already begun eating up the lawn. The calf helped. Pussy Willow gathered her family about her and they all went to sleep on the red cushions. Fritz, worn out, also took a nap. Molly was fed so much sugar it was a wonder she wasn't sick. The Fat Lady, in a cage made of wire screens, fanned herself and mourned because the Tiger was lost. At the last minute, however, he was returned, full of dust and briers, by one of the summer children, and took his seat beside the Fat Lady.

The performance began almost at once.

Nearly every seat was taken. Some of the summer people were on the porches with the Grandmas. Betty gave some exhibitions of fancy riding. As she wisely let Molly do just as she liked, that act was a great success.

Roger came next with the calf.

"He won't act," he told his audience. "But you can see what a fine little fellow he is."

Then and there, the calf decided to act. He had never had any lessons, but he kicked up his heels and capered about and seemed trying to turn himself into a rocking-horse. For a while, it seemed that he would be the only actor. But at last, amidst much laughter and applause, Roger and Martin, with Joe's help, got him off and tied to a tree.

It was Pussy Willow's turn next. Being rudely awakened and asked to display

her family, she took the first one in her mouth and ran off with him to the barn. Almost at once, she returned and went off again with the second. She would have taken the whole six, one after another, had it not been that Roger helped out by carrying the last four to the barn, himself, in the basket.

Fritz was down next. But firmly and gravely, he refused to act at all. In vain, Joe coaxed, pleaded, and commanded.

"It's no use," he told his disappointed audience. "When he won't he won't—and that's all there is to it."

So Marjory came on for her dance. She was a yellow butterfly hovering over the flowers. She was a yellow sunbeam on the river. She was a yellow-bird, her head on one side. Last of all, she became a yellow rose-petal drifting in the wind. The sum-

mer-folk cheered madly, and whispered to one another. Grandma Beach couldn't hear the words, but she saw the smiles. And she nodded her head in pleasure.

As for Granny, she left her seat in the audience and ran straight to Marjory's side.

"We'll show 'em how to dance," she cried.

Marjory laughed at Granny. Then she caught up her skirts and with her made the old-time courtesy. Back and forth, then, they went through the stately old measures of the dance of Granny's girlhood. The cheering was louder than ever. They had to do it all over again.

When Granny was tired, still the audience couldn't let Marjory go. Running to the barn, she caught up one of the kittens. With him cuddled on her shoulder, she piouretted about in a gay little jig as she had often done in the old days of the circus.

Then it was that Fritz changed his mind and decided to act. Yelping and jumping, he danced, too, round and round and round with Marjory and the kitten.

As always the applause went to his head. And when Marjory, out of breath, sank down beside Betty, Fritz went straight on, doing all the old tricks he could remember. He rolled over, he begged, he prayed, he became a dead dog. At the end of all, he stood gravely wagging his tail, waiting for more applause.

Next there was an exciting race between Martha in the goat-cart and Martin in the pony-cart. The goat stopped to eat grass, so it was won by Molly. This pleased the Fat Lady, for she was heard to remark to her twin, "Oh, Martie, I was so afraid I'd win!"

For the last thing, Betty had arranged a

dainty little tableau. It showed Granny sitting back of a great shoe made of brown paper. Gathered about her, were all the circus-performers and several small summer children borrowed for the occasion. The audience agreed that there never had been and never could be a dearer "Little Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe." Fritz took part in this, too. He sat close to Granny, his bright eyes fixed upon the children, as if he would help her look after them.

That wonderful afternoon ended with a picnic on the lawn. Some of the summer people, big and little, had planned it. With Celia's help it was a great surprise to the circus troupe and a great success. Every one had just what he wanted to eat, from the calf who munched green apples and the goat who was found trying to eat

one of Betty's little boots, to Pussy Willow, who had a big saucer of milk.

But the greatest surprise of that surprising day came when Joe counted up the gate, gingerbread, and lemonade money. It amounted to eleven whole dollars and seventeen cents.

"Whatever shall we do with it?" he cried.

The circus troupe stared at him. Not one of them had once remembered that there would be real money from their performance. And eleven dollars and seventeen cents!

"It's yours," said Uncle Ben, laughing at the row of tired, anxious little faces surrounding him. "And I should say you'd earned it."

"Couldn't we buy a summer-camp with it—up here somewhere?" suggested Mar-

tha. "Then we could come every summer."

"If we'd all chip in some," laughed Joe.

Then, to Marjory's surprise, Roger spoke.

"Pshaw," he said. "You don't need a camp up here. Anytime you want one there's Good Times Camp. You can borrow that, can't they, Margie?"

CHAPTER XIII

BLAZING A TRAIL

THEN, of course, Marjory and Lissy and Roger had to tell all about Good Times Camp. It was decided at once that to-morrow, which was the last day the Crimson Rambler bunch would be at The Pines, must be spent at the play-house.

"We'll have lunch put up at the hotel," said Betty to Nancy, "and stay all day."

As it turned out, they didn't go at all. For when Marjory awoke next morning, it was to the steady splash of rain on the roof. And when the two little girls looked out of the window it was on a steady downpour which delighted the thirsty gardens and

fields, but which wasn't intended for picnics.

"We'll leave that for next summer," said Joe, when Marjory and Lissy, in raincoats and caps, rushed up the steps of The Pines. The Crimson Rambler bunch was with Roger in his quiet hammock corner of the porch. It was cozy and shut-in there with the rain beating down outside.

"I'm coming to see the Grandmas, too," said Marjory. "I want to come every year, if Daddy will let me."

"So am I," dimpled Lissy, "if the Grandmas want me."

"I won't be here," said Roger gloomily.

"We'll see to that," said Marjory. She was so used to having things turn out just as she wanted them to, it wasn't strange she expected they always would.

"There's no telling," said Roger, "what

Sally will take it into her head to do next summer. But wherever she goes, I'll just have to tag along."

"Cheer up, old fellow," said Joe. "Next summer's a long way off. Meanwhile, we've made you treasurer of the Crimson Rambler Circus Troupe. And here are the funds."

Joe dropped a small red candy box, heavy with small change, into Roger's lap.

"What shall we do with them?" asked Betty.

"I know what I'd like to do with them."

Every one turned to look at Lissy. Her cheeks grew as red as the crimson ramblers themselves.

"I'd like to send them to those poor little Belgian children," she said.

All the children grew sober. Each of them had read, or listened while some

grown-up person read, in the papers of the terrible things that were happening in little Belgium this terrible August.

"Oh, if we only could," cried Nancy Spindle. "It does seem to me, sometimes, I must go straight over there and bring back all those poor little babies."

"Why couldn't we?" said Betty.

"How could we?" said Marjory.

"I don't know, quite," said Betty. "But there will be societies formed in New York for Belgian relief just as there are for every such thing. And Mother's sure to be president or chairman or something of them—she always is. Why can't we give her our money to use the very first chance that shows up?"

"We can," said Joe. "I say, it takes girls to think up things to do, doesn't it, Uncle Ben?" He turned toward Uncle Ben who

had just come up the steps. Uncle Ben didn't mind country rain. He said it was different from city rain—not so wet, some way.

"Fine, Betty," said Uncle Ben, when he had heard the plan.

"It was Lissy who started it," said Betty.

So Roger, as treasurer of the Crimson Rambler Circus Troupe, turned over its present funds to Betty. And Betty promised to give them to her mother just as soon as she went back to New York.

"Is England really in the war, Uncle Ben?" said Roger suddenly. He had been silent all through the talking and planning.

"Yes, my boy," said Uncle Ben.

"Dick will go, then," said Roger.

"Dick?"

"Cousin Dick—my guardian," said

Roger. "We're Canadians, you know," he added proudly.

All the bunch looked at Roger. It made the war seem a great deal nearer, some way, to think of some one you almost knew, going into it.

"The war isn't going to last long, Roger, we all hope," said Uncle Ben. "Perhaps it will all clear up before Canada has to send her troops."

"Is there war in England?" cried Marjory.

Uncle Ben's arms went around Marjory.

"The war isn't in England," he said, "but England's in the war. Why, Margie?"

"Daddy's there," cried Marjory.

"He's in London," said Uncle Ben. "Real war hasn't touched London, yet, and we hope it never will. I wouldn't worry

about Daddy. He's all right. Now, speaking of plans—"

Uncle Ben didn't get one word further. The whole bunch shouted and fell upon him, every one trying to get the best place and make himself heard first. Roger and Lissy and Marjory looked on bewildered.

"You don't understand," cried Nancy Spindle. She caught Marjory's hands and went spinning with her up and down the porch. "But when Uncle Ben says 'speaking of plans' and twinkles up his eyes—so"—Nancy tried to twinkle up her own sharp little eyes like Uncle Ben's—"we all know something perfectly splendid is going to happen."

"Well," said Uncle Ben, disentangling himself from several pairs of arms, "this is a perfectly splendid plan if I did make it all by myself without a bit of help from

any of you. What would you say—you bunch—to inviting Miss Marjory Brook and Miss Lissy Penny—"

"To go back with us to White Birch Camp?" cried Martha, clapping her hands. "That's it, isn't it?"

Uncle Ben nodded, and the bunch fell on him again. Roger stood quite by himself.

"Margie's getting ready to ask me if the Grandmas will say 'yes,'" laughed Uncle Ben. "I know that puckery little twist to her mouth. They have said it. I've just come from there. I think Granny would like to go along, herself. Grandma Beach is at this minute thinking up all the DON'TS she's going to pack up to send with us. I told her sister Judy and I are used to looking after young folks, and that we'll do our best by you. But Grandma

thinks you are very special young folks and must be looked after very specially."

Marjory's mouth lost its puckers to whisper into Uncle Ben's ear.

"It wasn't that made me puckery, Uncle Ben. But—isn't Roger to go, too?"

"Roger?" cried Uncle Ben. "Of course, Roger's going along. I want him to make pictures of my camp and my cow and myself that will make us all famous."

"Honest, Uncle Ben?" cried Roger. Marjory had never seen the boy's face so bright and eager.

"Sally'll let you," she cried.

"Oh, Sally won't care," said Roger. "But do you all really want me?"

"Even to Fritz," cried Betty. "Here he comes."

It was a wet, muddy Fritz who came stiffly up the steps. But he gamely held out

his paw, rolled over, and fell asleep in the middle of the roll.

"Oh, I hope it won't rain," said Martha, for the third time running to look at the clouds.

"My weather eye sees a fair sunset," said Uncle Ben.

Uncle Ben's weather eye saw just right. And next morning, when the Crimson Rambler rolled into The Willows to pick up Lissy and Marjory there wasn't a cloud in all the sky. The little girls were tucked in between Nancy and Betty on the back seat. Martha was in one chair, and Roger in the other. Slim little Martin was in front with Uncle Ben and Joe. The space between the chairs was kept for Fritz.

"He wasn't here at all last night," said Wesley.

"He hasn't run away in ever so long," said

Joe. "I thought he'd settled down for good."

"We'll keep him for you when he comes," said Grandma Beach graciously. "He is a most unusual dog.

Betty laughed softly as they drove out of the yard and rumbled across the bridge.

"Remember, Joe," she said, "how dear Aunt Prudence used to say just that the first summer we had Fritz?"

Joe nodded.

"I hope he isn't lost," said Marjory.

"Fritz can't be lost in this country," said Uncle Ben. "He's at home everywhere."

Uncle Ben stopped a minute at a lawyer's office in Ridgewood.

"I found a strange thing," he said, as he came back. "Out tramping the other day, I found that some one had been trespassing on private land beyond Glenmore. I've

just asked Phil Archer to look into it. Trespassing won't do."

Uncle Ben seemed to know every one. He stopped to speak to this one and that one. He asked after children, animals, and crops. At a beautiful farm, where all the meadows were sweet with crimson clover, he stopped for a drink of some specially fine spring water. A jolly little woman gave each of them a delicious molasses cooky.

"Hark," said Joe in the middle of a big bite, "isn't that Fritz?"

"The dog?" laughed the woman. "Is he yours really? We used to think once that he was ours. And he comes back often for a visit. He's shut up in the barn so he wouldn't follow Johnny to town."

As soon as the door was open, out bounded Fritz. He was in the car in a minute and ate all of Nancy's cooky before any one

could stop him. But at last he took his seat between Roger and Martha. Each one put a hand on his collar.

"He won't run away now," said Joe. "He loves to motor."

"Just think of that beggar's knowing all these farms," said Uncle Ben.

Every one began telling stories of Fritz and his strange adventures. He rolled his big bright eyes from one to another. If only he could have spoken, how many other stories he might have told. How many other children, from his puppyhood to this minute, he had known and loved. In his funny dog-fashion how many pleasant things he had helped to bring about. He grew drowsy thinking of them all, and went sound asleep.

They had lunch by the side of the road. Soon after, they crossed the river, which had

been near enough to talk to them all the way, even when they couldn't see it. Now, they were in a sandy country, where the hills rose higher and higher and still higher. The road began to wind steadily up, losing itself oftener and oftener in wooded places, until finally it cut right through the heart of the great green forest. At last, just at sunset, winding and winding and still climbing, it came out into an open space on the very tiptop of a mountain. Here was White Birch Camp.

"Remember how we found Martin here once?" said Nancy to Joe.

Even with a year and more of days of being together again, Martha couldn't bear to think of those days when she and Martin had been separated. She reached over to feel of his shoulder to be sure he was really there. And Martin reached up and

squeezed her plump little hand to tell her he really was. But when every one had been unloaded from the car, the Martie Twins kept close together.

Uncle Ben's sister, Judy, and the little girls slept inside the camp, Uncle Ben and the boys sleeping on the porch. They were all up early and there were so many delightful things to do, it was hard to tell which to do first.

"I move that we blaze a trail," said Joe. "Uncle Ben wants a short one to the lake."

"Blaze away," said Uncle Ben. "Judy and I will meet you at the lake at noon."

"Can we really build a fire right out in these woods?" asked Marjory.

"Wesley won't let us," said Lissy.

Such a shout as went up from the delighted bunch.

"Blazing a trail isn't burning a trail," explained Joe.

"I know better than that," said Roger.

"Don't you care, girls," said Nancy. "It does sound just as if you burned something."

"What do you do?" asked Lissy.

"You cut a new path through the woods," said Joe. "We'll take along axes and hatchets to clear away some of the underbrush."

"The blazing part," said Betty, "is chipping or blazing a bit of bark off the trees that go along by the new trail. Then when you want to, you can find the trail again by looking at them."

Armed with hatchets and axes, the bunch plunged into the woods back of the camp.

"Whoever sees the lake first and blazes the last tree on the trail to it, can name the trail," said Nancy Spindle.

"It must be a good name," said Joe, "because these mountain names stick to things forever."

They went on slowly. Sometimes it seemed that they couldn't find a way through. But always after a little they made one. Whenever a tree was blazed, a great shout went up. Fritz tore about making all sorts of unnecessary trips on errands of his own. Following him, as he plowed through some unusually thick underbrush, Lissy found herself alone on a pretty little knoll. Looking down, she saw a gleam of blue, as if a bit of the sky had dropped into the green.

"Oh," she cried, "what is that?"

"The lake! The lake!" shouted the bunch, climbing the knoll. "Lissy's found it! She must name it!"

Lissy blazed the tall pine on the knoll.

Then she dropped down to think. "I wish Betty'd found it," she said. "She always has such good names for everything. Really it ought to be named for Fritz, because he brought me right here. But I don't like 'Fritz Trail' and 'Dog Trail' won't do either. Oh, I know—Runaway Trail. Isn't that pretty?"

Every one liked Lissy's name at once. And the last bit of Runaway Trail was covered by flying feet.

Uncle Ben and Judy were already at the lake. They had come the long way around, bringing all sorts of things with them.

"You won't have to come that way again," cried Martin, "Runaway Trail's all ready."

After the best kind of a lunch, eaten out of baskets, every one helped put up a big tent. After that, they went out on the lake

for a long row, one load after another in the pretty red boat. After the last load had come in, it was time to eat again.

When it grew dark, Uncle Ben built a great bonfire. They all sat around and toasted marsh-mallows. And then, Lissy and Marjory found that they were going to camp right here on the shore of the lake. The little girls were stowed away on balsam boughs inside the tent. Its front flap was raised so it was almost like being out-of-doors. Outside, the boys and Uncle Ben stretched themselves out on blankets. The night was just full of soft stirrings and whisperings. The stars twinkled and laughed. The great, kind, beautiful darkness came down and folded them away in dreams, safe and snug. And all in a twinkling—or so it seemed—the stars had scampered away and there was the sun, round and red, say-

ing "Good morning" to them over the mountain-peaks.

Joe and Roger and Martin went trout-fishing in a famous little stream. Judy took Marjory and Lissy out on the lake to try their luck. But Marjory caught her hook in a snag and they had to row round and round in one spot to get it loose. They all laughed so hard that the fish stayed in the darkest spots they could find. Not one of them got caught. And the girls gave up fishing and went water-lilying instead.

There was plenty of trout for dinner though. Uncle Ben and Joe cooked them on the coals. And altogether too soon, it was time to go back to White Birch Camp.

"And now in just a minute or two it will be morning again," said Lissy, as she and Marjory cuddled down together in their little bunk that night.

The Crimson Rambler was empty enough that next morning with just Uncle Ben and Roger in front and Lissy and Marjory in back. But there was a big basket of lunch, another of trout, and still another of water-lilies for the Grandmas. And they helped fill up.

The whole bunch stood on the porch and waved good-by. 'Way down the mountain-side, the travelers could hear Fritz's disgusted barks because he wasn't one of the motoring party.

"It's lovely to go, but it's lovely to get back," said Marjory, as late that afternoon the House of the Grandmothers came in sight. Long rosy rays of sunset touched the river and the lawn. Grandma was on the steps with Aunt Eunice back of her.

"We'll do it all over again next summer," called back Uncle Ben, as he and

Roger sped away toward The Pines where Uncle Ben would pass the night, leaving at sun-up.

Grandma Beach kissed each little granddaughter.

"You must be very quiet," she said, "Granny is ill."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PEARL BOX

"HUSH," said Lissy to Marjory next morning.

Marjory sat up straight to stare at Lissy. It was still very early. But Lissy was all dressed. And she had on her apron.

"Celia was up with Granny all night long," said Lissy. "I'm going to get breakfast. You come down and set the table."

It was a long, strange week that followed in The House of the Grandmothers. Granny was very ill. She wanted Celia with her all the time. Grandma Beach helped Celia take care of the little old lady all she could. Aunt Eunice cried and fretted.

It was Lissy who got the meals. Of course, there wasn't as much to eat as there was when Celia did it. But they were good. It was Lissy who took care of the parlors and made beds and picked blackberries and ran on errands. Marjory helped all she could. She set tables and wiped dishes and dusted and sat with Aunt Eunice. But it was Lissy who took charge of things down stairs. And afterward, when Granny was so sick, that no one cared much about eating, it was Lissy who slipped quietly into the sick-room, and began to do little things for Granny. And soon, Granny wanted her there.

Then one afternoon, when Granny seemed some better, and Celia and Grandma Beach were both lying down for a little while, Lissy and Marjory both sat in Granny's room while she slept.

"I'm about as much good to her," said Marjory softly, looking at the tiny figure in the big bed, "as those asters on the table."

"Granny likes the asters better than anything else in the room," laughed Lissy.

"I like fresh air, too," said Granny's weak voice quite unexpectedly. And turning from the vase of asters, the little girls saw that Granny was awake and smiling at them much like her old self. "And that's what you've been to me, Lissy."

"I'm so glad you feel better, Granny," cried Lissy. She deftly patted a pillow into shape and raised Granny's head a little. "Is that comfy? Now, you mustn't talk, you know. But I'll sit right here and mend my apron. If you want anything, you just whisper it."

Granny smiled from one little grand-

daughter to the other. She closed her eyes and seemed to go back to sleep.

Marjory curled up with her book in the window. Lissy sat in Granny's rocker close to the bed and began to mend. She tried to do it just as Aunt Melissa had showed her. But it was hard work. Lissy didn't like to sew. The thread knotted and knotted. Lissy pulled and pulled. Finally, she gave a sudden quick jerk. The knot didn't come out, even then. But the little old wooden box in her lap, in which were her scissors and spools and extra needles, fell bottomside up to the floor, spilling out everything as it did so.

As quietly as she could, Lissy got down on the floor and began to pick up the things. Marjory came to help.

"Where did you get that box?" cried Granny. Turning, both little girls saw

Granny halfway up in bed, pointing to the little old wooden box in Lissy's lap.

"It's an old one I've always had, Granny," said Lissy soothingly. "I'm sorry I dropped it. Will you go back to sleep?"

Lissy was at Granny's side now. She put the box on the bed. She patted Granny's hand in her best nurse fashion.

"It's the pearl-box!" cried Granny.

"Oh, no, it isn't, Granny," said Lissy, as if she'd been speaking to a child. "It's just an old wooden one that was mother's, I guess."

"It's the pearl-box," said Granny again. She reached for Lissy's box.

"It's just wood," soothed Lissy. She put the box into the little wrinkled hand. "See, I bit off a corner when I was a baby. It isn't pearl at all."

"It's the pearl-box," insisted Granny.

Her cheeks were flushed. A lock of silvery hair escaped from her cap.

Lissy gently tucked it back.

"Where is the key?" said Granny.

"There isn't any," said Lissy. "It opens without a key—see."

She opened the box.

"Margie has it," said Granny.

"She thinks it is the pearl-box, Lissy," said Marjory. "The one she wanted to give me my birthday—don't you remember?"

"It is the pearl-box!" cried Granny.

"Oh, dear," said Lissy hurriedly to Marjory. "She's gone right out of her dear little head. You run get Celia, Margie."

Marjory started, but Granny called her back.

"Give me the key," she said.

"Let her try it, Lissy," said Marjory.

She came back, slipping the little key on its silk cord over her head. She laid it in Granny's hand.

"Slip the key in the lock, Lissy," said Granny.

"It's all unlocked now, Granny dear," said Lissy. But Granny held out the key. Her hand shook with eagerness.

To please her, Lissy slipped the key in the lock. To her surprise it fitted.

"Press hard," said Granny.

Lissy pressed hard. In an instant, up flew the whole inside of the box. There, on a faded lining of red satin, lay a mass of shining pearls. They were small, but how they glistened.

Granny drew them out, her hands caressing them.

"I wore them when I married your great-grandfather," she said. "And I gave them

to your mother when she married Peter Penny. Margaret and Eunice never knew it," she chuckled. "They thought the pearls were lost."

The two little granddaughters stared at each other. Granny slipped the pink cord with the key on it over her own head. Then she lay back on her pillows and with a smile went off to sleep. The precious old box with its gleaming pearls was held fast in both her hands.

Lissy and Marjory went softly over to the window to talk it all over.

"Why, Lissy Penny," whispered Marjory, breathless with excitement, "I've seen that box on your table always in The Penny Bank, and never once dreamed what was in it."

"I've always loved it," said Lissy. "I used to sleep with it, sometimes. And I've

always carried it with me. Don't you remember it went to Doris's wedding?"

Marjory nodded.

"I just had to bring it this time," went on Lissy. "Aunt Melissa wanted to buy me a new work-box. Just suppose she had, Margie."

"Those lovely pearls are really yours," said Marjory.

"Mercy me," cried Lissy. "You don't suppose so—really—do you?"

"Of course, Granny gave them to me on my birthday," said Marjory slowly. "But that was when she thought I was you. And, anyway, she gave them to our mother first. I guess they're yours, Lissy."

Grandma slept a long time. Lissy finished her apron. Marjory went back to her book. But every few minutes, she said something about the lovely pearls. And

how strange it was and how lovely it was that Lissy had brought them back to Granny.

When Granny opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was the little old box with the pearls gleaming on their satin lining.

"Try them on, little granddaughters," she said, in her sweet, eager little fashion.

"We may as well please her," said Lissy.

"Lissy first," said Granny, "she's the oldest."

Awkwardly, Lissy slipped the gleaming things over her head. She had just put on the gingham apron to see if the patch looked very bad. The pearls shimmered down over it. But they didn't look quite as if they belonged there. And Lissy's face above them was flushed and anxious.

As soon as Granny would let her, she slipped them off.

"Now, Margie," said Granny, "you try them."

Marjory could scarcely wait to try the pearls. She dropped them over her head. They slipped into place and nestled around her neck and down over her little white gown quite as if they liked it there. Marjory grew pink with pleasure at their beauty. She twined them about her little hand and dropped a curtsey at Granny.

In the middle of the curtsey, in came Grandma Beach.

"Where did they come from?" she cried. She was startled out of her usual calm at sight of the string of old jewels.

"They were in the little old box, Grandma," cried Lissy. "They have always been there, I suppose. But father and I never knew it."

"I gave them to Margaret," said Granny.

"I didn't care if she did marry Peter Penny. He was a good man, and I always said so."

Celia came in just then. When she had heard all about the finding of the pearls, she bustled them all out of the room, and said Granny must rest till supper-time. Marjory took off the beautiful necklace and slipped it into Granny's hand.

Then she followed Grandma Beach and Lissy downstairs. Lissy hurried out into the kitchen to get Granny's supper-tray ready. Grandma Beach stopped in the living-room to shout the news about the pearls into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet. Marjory went slowly down to the willow-nest.

"Do tell," cried Aunt Eunice, when the news finally reached her. "So there's where they've been all this time. Now, Granny will give them to one of the children. Which one, do you think, Margaret?"

"They belong to Melissa," said Grandma. "She's the oldest."

"They just suit Margaret," said Aunt Eunice.

"They'll both want them," said Grandma Beach grimly.

It was just at this minute that Marjory slipped back into the room.

"Lissy isn't here, is she, Grandma?" she said, getting close to Grandma to make her hear right.

"Melissa is busy in the kitchen," said Grandma.

"It's about the pearls," said Marjory. "You see, Grandma, Granny really gave them to me for my birthday."

"She supposed you were Melissa then," said Grandma Beach sternly. "Melissa is the oldest girl in the family."

"I know it, Grandma," said Marjory.

"I want the pearls dreadfully, myself. But I want Lissy to have them, please, if you can get Granny to give them to her. She's never had anything pretty like them in all her life."

"I see," said Grandma. "Well, here she comes, now."

Marjory ran out of the room. Lissy, flushed and anxious, came in.

"Grandma Beach," she said, speaking slowly and clearly, "do you suppose Granny'll ever give it back to me? It does seem as if it's mine."

"It is, by right," said Grandma Beach. "You're the oldest, Melissa."

"Am I very selfish to want it back?" said Lissy.

"It's a beautiful necklace," said Grandma Beach. But somehow her face looked disappointed or surprised or something.

"Necklace?" cried Lissy. "Oh, Grandma Beach, I don't mean the pearls. Of course, when Granny gives them to any one, she will give them to Margie. Why, they look just like her. How would a Penny like me look in such lovely things? It isn't the pearls. It's—it's the box, Grandma. The little old box. You see, I've always had it ever since I can remember. And I don't see how I can get along without it. Do you suppose Granny will give it back to me, by and by, when she gets well?"

CHAPTER XV

GOOD TIMES CAMP

NEXT morning Granny was much better. It almost seemed that finding the long-lost pearls had cured her.

She didn't say another word about them. But whenever her eyes fell on the little old box on the stand beside her bed, she chuckled to herself. Sometimes she opened it, took out the pearls, and twined them about her hands.

One morning, when Granny was so much better that she was downstairs again, Roger came to The Willows to see if Lissy and Marjory could go to Good Times Camp.

Lissy was sure she couldn't be spared.

But Celia said she could get on nicely now without any help.

So Molly was harnessed to her cart. And with the usual basket of lunch, away they went, Roger driving as usual.

"It does seem good to be going up there again," said Marjory.

Molly seemed glad, too. She scampered along, taking little sidesteps now and then and climbing the hill gayly.

"How small these woods look," cried Marjory, "since we've seen those around Uncle Ben's camp. And what a baby mountain this is."

"I told you it wasn't like a real mountain," said Roger.

"What is the matter with you, Lissy Penny?" cried Marjory. "You haven't said one word except those I've made you this whole morning."

"I'm sorry," said Lissy. "But I keep thinking and thinking that maybe I sha'n't ever come up here again."

"Why not?" cried Marjory. She leaned out to stare around Roger at Lissy. Daddy's letter says we can stay till October."

"You can," said Lissy. "But I was to stay a month, you know. Then, if I didn't like it or the Grandmas didn't invite me to stay longer I was to go home."

"But don't you like it?" said Marjory.

"I love it," said Lissy. "And I can't bear to go home—anyway without you, Margie. But the month's up day after to-morrow. I never remembered it till this very morning. And the Grandmas haven't invited me to stay any longer."

"They will," said Marjory.

Lissy shook her head.

"Grandma doesn't like me like she does

you, Margie," she said. "And she doesn't like father. She always says 'Peter Penny' or 'Your father.' Why can't she say 'my son,' just the way father says 'my daughter' to Doris?"

"Oh, dear, I don't know," said Marjory. "Maybe that's just her way, too, Lissy."

"The worst of it is," went on Lissy, as gloomy as ever Lissy could be, "I wanted to make up things between them. And it isn't done, and I can't do it and I might just as well go home and be done with it."

There wasn't anything either Marjory or Roger could think of to say to this. Roger never found much to say to Lissy anyway. So it was an unusually glum little trio that climbed down from the cart and went into the camp. It had been closed so long that its doors and windows had to be opened to air it out. Then there was some picking up

to do, and Lissy suddenly decided she would sweep and dust. She was soon too busy to remember unpleasant things, singing at the top of her lungs.

On the porch, Marjory tried to get Roger to make a picture of the camp.

"I can't," said Roger.

"Why don't you take lessons so you can?" said Marjory. "Uncle Ben says you have real talent, Roger."

"I did take lessons," said Roger. "And Dick was going to let me go on, but—" Roger stopped short, and the old frown came back into its place.

"Never mind," said Marjory quickly, "if it's going to make you look like that. Let's talk about something else."

"Let's go down to my hammock," said Roger. "Lissy does make such a dust and such a noise."

Down in the cool little hollow among the evergreens, with the gurgle of the spring near by, you couldn't be cross no matter how much you wanted to be. Roger lay in the hammock and laughed at Marjory, who tried to catch fish from the brook in her hands. Molly, loose from her cart, browsed about happily.

"Dinner time," said Lissy, coming briskly down from the camp.

"The sun's getting here now," said Roger. "Let's go back to the porch. I'll bring the milk," he added, fishing it out of the spring where it had been put to keep cool.

The lunch was spread out on paper napkins. There was a pile of Celia's best sandwiches, plenty of cookies, and some great ripe peaches.

"We'll have music while we eat," cried Roger, when they were all ready.

He ran inside the camp, and set the victrola going.

"Peaches don't come first," he said, when he came back, and sat down on one of the red cushions.

"Mine does," said Lissy. She set her teeth into a round rosy peach. "I just can't wait till dessert for it."

"'Come back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen!'" sang a divine tenor voice from the victrola.

Marjory was just passing the sandwiches to Roger. There was a sound of quick heavy steps through the underbrush, down a road just in front of the camp, which had never seemed interesting enough to follow. Next minute, into the clearing came a tall, thin man with keen, snapping black eyes.

"And what are we doing here?" he asked

in a voice that snapped like his eyes.

"Eating lunch," said Lissy. "Have a cooky?" she added hospitably.

"Didn't know you're trespassing, hey?" said the man.

The three children stared at him.

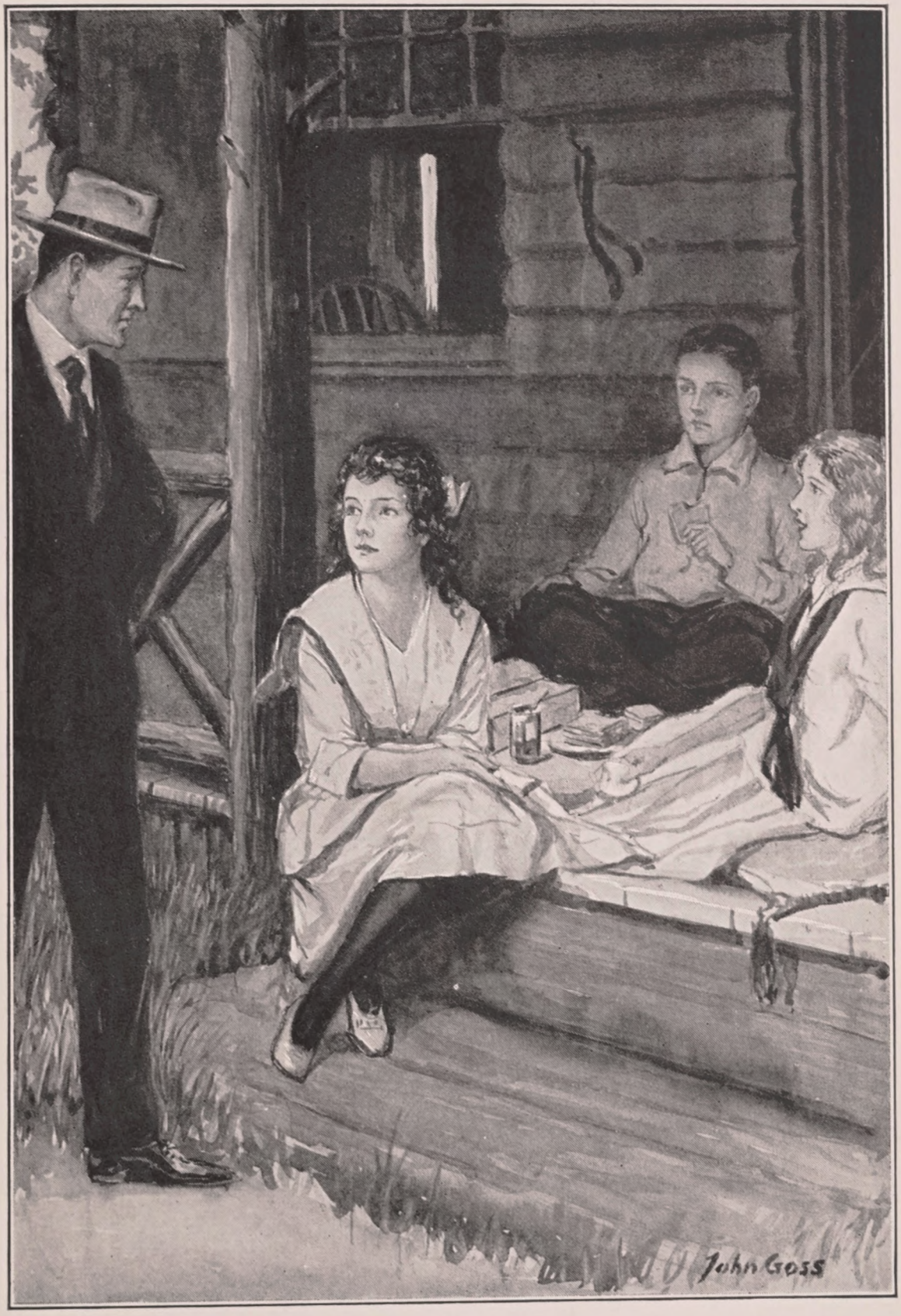
"'Come back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen!'" sang the voice from the victrola.

"Who's inside?" said the man. "I'll just have a word with him."

That was too much. As the tall man entered the camp, Marjory and Lissy screamed with laughter. Roger rolled over on his cushion and laughed aloud.

"Funny, isn't it?" cried the man, coming back, his face red and angry. "Who's machine is that, anyway?"

"Mine," said Roger. He stopped laughing and got to his feet.



"THE THREE CHILDREN STARED AT HIM."

"That's a likely story," said the man. "And whose camp is this?"

"Ours," said Marjory.

"Not much, it isn't," said the man. He stood tall and threatening above the children.

"It's our play-house," said Roger.

"It is, is it?" said the man unpleasantly. "Well, we'll see about that. Now listen. This camp is on private land. And whoever comes here for anything whatever trespasses. So you're trespassers. Understand?"

Roger was trying to think where he had heard that word "trespass" before lately.

"In the next place," went on the man in a voice big enough for the biggest trespasser that ever trespassed anywhere, "this camp happens to belong to The Sportsman's Club of New York City."

"I picked up a card with that name on it to-day, when I swept," said Lissy, caught by his last words.

"Did, did you?" said the man. "Well, then, you ought to know you're trespassing. Now, you'll have to settle up. About how much damage do you think you've done here, anyway?"

"Not any," said Marjory. "You see, we've cleaned it up and furnished it. So it's really much nicer than it was when we first found it. All these things are ours."

"Well, they may be and they may not. But if they are, they don't belong here. And the sooner ye move them out, the better for you. Curtains, cushions, victrola—all the junk."

"We haven't done a bit of harm," said Roger sturdily. He was scowling his

blackest now. "You can see that for yourself."

"You broke in to begin with," said the man.

"I suppose we did," said Roger. "But we didn't know it belonged to any one in particular."

"Didn't see no signs, 'No Trespassing,' as you came up the road from The Pines, did you?" said the man. He waved his hand toward the road up which he had just come.

"We didn't come that way," said Marjory. "We drove up the other road."

"Thought this camp was just set down here for you, I suppose?" asked the man.

That was just what Marjory had thought.

"Couldn't we rent it just till the end of the season?" she asked. "After that we wouldn't need it—that is, not till next summer. Then Uncle Ben Baker's bunch is

coming, and we've promised it to them, you see."

"Ben Baker'd be the last man on earth to let you have this camp," said the man. "He's the very one that called the matter to my attention. Said some one was trespassing up here. Didn't know who it was, did he?"

"No," said Roger. He remembered, now, where he'd heard the word "trespass."

"Does it belong to him?" asked Marjory, still hopeful. "Uncle Ben would surely let us rent it."

"It belongs to The Sportsman's Club, I tell you," said the man. "It isn't for rent. But if it was, you couldn't rent it. It would take some money to rent this camp, I can tell you. Now, get these duds out of here —or you'll find out what will happen. I've written The Sportsman's Club."

"We can't get them out to-day," said Roger. "We've just a little cart and a pony. And it's a long way."

Just here, Molly, who had been grazing by herself, stuck her friendly face around the corner of the camp.

"Horse grazing, too," said the man, "and doing all sorts of damage. You ought to be fined good and heavy to help you remember to leave other folks' things alone after this. But if you'll get out of here at once, I'll do my best to get you off easy this time. But you'll have to hustle."

It was a sorry little load that drove down the hill-road that afternoon. Marjory told Granny all about it at once. Lissy told Celia and Wesley. Celia told Grandma. And one by one, they shouted most of it into Aunt Eunice's ear-trumpet.

"That must have been Phil Archer from

Ridgewood," said Wesley. He laughed to himself. "To think you kids have been playing in that hunting-lodge all summer and no one ever even suspected it. It belongs to the swellest Club in New York, I've heard. It hasn't been open, now, in two or three summers."

"Can't I rent it, Wesley?" cried Marjory. "I've plenty of money. And we must have it next summer."

"I'll tell you what, Miss Margaret," said Celia, comfortingly. "I'd just shut it up now, and next summer, if you can't rent it, we'll find some other place just as good. And you shall furnish that."

"No other place could be quite so good, Celia," said Marjory. "It's just like losing your own home."

She was sober all through supper. At its close, she slipped away to her room. When

she came downstairs, she had a letter in her hand.

"It can't do any harm to ask them," she said. "I copied the address from that card you brought home, Lissy, and I've offered to rent it for a month yet this year and all next summer."

She was so important about it, that both Celia and Lissy laughed.

"Did you tell them you had used it rent-free all summer?" asked Wesley from the kitchen porch.

"That lawyer-man's done that," said Marjory. "So I didn't take time."

Marjory ran over to The Pines to show Roger the letter before she mailed it.

He was tired and white and lay in his hammock.

"Mr. Spicer says we'll have to get out," he said.

"Wait till I get an answer to this," said Marjory.

"You won't get it," said Roger.

"I always do get things," said Marjory.

Just at this minute, Lissy hurried up the steps.

"I ran all the way trying to catch up with you, Margie," she said. "Grandma's sent me to mail this." She held up a thin gray letter that looked like the one she had received from Grandma Beach last May. "It's for father," she added tragically. "And I just know it says to send for me to come home."

"Oh, dear," said Marjory. "You can't go, Lissy."

"Oh, yes, I can," said Lissy, "if they don't want me."

"There'll be two of us to go," said Roger. "'Cause Dick's enlisted. He's going to

war. And Sally and I are going back to Toronto."

Two very sober little granddaughters went slowly back toward the House of the Grandmothers. They stopped in the post-office and dropped in the two letters. One, in Marjory's straight up and down school-girl hand, went to The Sportsman's Club in New York. The other, in Grandma's spidery writing, went to Mr. Peter Penny, also in New York.

CHAPTER XVI

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

THE next day was so rainy that Grandma Beach wouldn't hear of any one's going to Good Times Camp for any reason whatsoever. Lissy spent most of the morning packing up her things. Marjory spent most of it unpacking them.

They talked it over with Celia.

"I don't know what your Grandma wrote your father, Miss Lissy," she said. "I thought she was getting used to the idea of two granddaughters. But you never can tell. If she's decided to keep you, you'll stay, and if she's decided to send you home, why, home you'll go."

There wasn't much comfort in that. Lissy went back to her packing.

"Everything's in," she said at last, "except the little box. I do want it dreadfully, but, of course, I can't ask Granny for it. Anyway, it isn't on the stand any more—it's been gone three days, now."

"You'll have to take out something to wear to-morrow, Lissy Penny," said Marjory. "'Cause it's Sunday, and Grandma isn't going to send you home on Sunday."

"I'd forgotten all about Sunday," said Lissy. She set about unstrapping the suitcase. "I'll take out just the things I'll need."

The rest of Saturday and the whole of Sunday dragged along. Not one word did Grandma say about Lissy's going or staying. Monday morning came, clear and cool after the long rain. Bright leaves here

and there in the maples showed the first soft touch of fall.

The children waited about all the morning. No letter came from either The Sportsman's Club, or Papa Penny. And nothing was said about Lissy's going home.

"They're just waiting for father's answer," she said. "Well, I can't start to-day, anyway. So let's go to Good Times Camp and break up housekeeping."

"Let's wait for my letter," said Marjory.

"You'd have to keep house all alone," said Roger, "even if you did rent it. Lissy and I'll both be gone."

So, soon after dinner, they set out. They were to bring down what things they could in the cart. And late in the day, Wesley would drive up, get the others, lock the camp, and see that everything was left all right there.

It was sober work moving out the little table and chairs, picking up and packing the dainty cups and plates, and taking down the curtains. They dragged everything but the victrola to the porch, piled them up, and put the two hammocks and the scarlet cushions on top. Then Lissy and Marjory sat down on the porch to rest, while Roger went down the road toward The Pines to look up Molly, who had strayed farther away than usual.

In a few minutes, they heard him coming back, scrambling through the underbrush. Molly was neighing resentfully at such hurry. Up to the porch he came, dragging the little horse along by her halter.

"They're coming," he said. "I heard voices and I waited just a minute, and there they were—that lawyer-man and another man."

"Let them come," said Lissy. Her face flushed. She stood up tall and straight on the lowest step. "They can see we're all packed up ready to move out."

Marjory stood, making herself as tall as she possibly could, beside Lissy. And Roger, with Molly's halter in his hand, stood next them. Molly put her head over his shoulder. There, in a solemn row, they all waited.

They could all hear the voices now. The lawyer's sneering one said,

"Yes, sir, they broke in, and pastured a horse, and brought a victrola, and did no end of damage."

Almost at once, two men came in sight. As they did so, dropping Lissy's hand, Marjory rushed straight toward them.

"Daddy!" she screamed. "Daddy! Daddy!"

"Why, Margie-girl!" cried the man with the lawyer. He caught Marjory right up in his arms. And at that same moment, Lissy bounded toward him, too, and Roger and Molly stood quite by themselves.

"Where—where—where did you come from, Daddy?" cried Marjory, nearly smothering her father with her hugs. She was half laughing, half crying.

"Oh, Mr. Brook," cried Lissy, hopping up and down, and trying to get hold of one hand, "where did you come from?"

"Well, well," cried Marjory's father, holding her fast, and reaching for Lissy, and staring at Roger and Molly. "Are—these —your trespassers, Archer?"

"They are, Mr. Brook," said the lawyer, utterly amazed.

Mr. Brook threw back his head. It's a wonder the summer-folks down at the

hotel didn't hear him laugh. He sat right down on the pine-needles, Marjory and all.

"And you've brought me way up here to evict these kiddies?" he asked Archer when he could speak.

"They broke in," said Archer.

"Why didn't you say they were children?"

"Didn't know, myself, when I wrote," said Archer.

"But we haven't done a bit of harm, Daddy!" cried Marjory. "And we've had the best times. Here's Roger, Daddy. This is my very own Daddy, Roger. Didn't I tell you he was the best Daddy in all the world? And you needn't worry—everything'll be all right now."

By this time, Roger and Molly had arrived and taken up their places beside Mar-

jory, Lissy, and Mr. Brook. Mr. Brook held out his hand to Roger.

"Tell me all about it," he said.

"Are you The Sportsman's Club?" cried Roger.

"Not quite all of it," said Mr. Brook, "but a fair-sized member. And they've sent me up here to look after this trespassing business."

"We didn't mean to trespass," said Roger, anxiously.

"We just found this dear little house and moved in," cried Marjory. "Why, Daddy, I wrote you all about it."

"They broke in," said Archer again.

"I don't see any 'No Trespassing' signs about here, Archer," said Mr. Brook. "And it was my old friend, Ben Baker, who found out about the trespassing, anyway, wasn't it? Perhaps, you haven't looked

after the place very carefully for a summer or two?"

The lawyer flushed.

"The signs are on the road the cars travel," he said. "Who'd suppose any one would crawl up the other way and break in? With a horse and a victrola," he added.

"Set it going, Roger," said Mr. Brook unexpectedly.

"I can look after the rest of this business, I think, Archer," said Mr. Brook, as Roger ran into the camp. "And thank you for calling our attention to the matter. It has ended more happily than I expected. By the way," he added, "I'll let you know if we decide to rent the place. Some one up this way wants it, Blake said. What was the name—I've forgotten. A lady, wasn't it? Blake seemed to think so. Anyway, I'll let you know."

"Why, Daddy," cried Marjory, "the name was Brook, of course! I should think you could remember that. And I'm the lady who wants to rent it."

"You?" cried Daddy.

Just as he laughed again—one of his biggest, jolliest laughs, Molly neighed, and the victrola started off on a gay jig of rejoicing. Mr. Archer didn't like the victrola. And he saw he wasn't needed another minute, anyway, and that the sooner he went, the better. So off he went down the road toward The Pines.

"What on earth do you want to rent this shooting-lodge for, my lady?" said Daddy when he could speak.

"For a summer home for the bunch and all of us, next summer," explained Marjory, importantly.

"And you wrote that letter that set

The Sportsman's Club to thinking?" he chuckled.

"Of course I didn't know you were in it, Daddy," she said.

"Of course not," said Daddy. "Well, as I am, and as the Club has left me to do as I like about renting their property and to set my own price and everything, I don't see why I shouldn't rent it to you. What would you be willing to pay?"

"Why, I don't know, Daddy," said Marjory. "It doesn't make much difference to me, you'd have to pay it, anyway."

"Let's strike a bargain," laughed Mr. Brook. "Lissy and Roger shall witness it. I'll rent you this shooting-lodge, which you call Good Times Camp, for the rest of this season and all of next, if you'll keep house for me this winter."

"We can," cried Marjory, clapping her

hands. "We can have Good Times Camp —didn't I tell you so, Roger?"

"Another victrola selection, please, Roger," said Mr. Brook.

"But where did you come from, Daddy?" cried Marjory again. She had asked this question whenever there was a chance ever since she'd first discovered Daddy.

"Well, to begin with," said Daddy, "there's a War in Europe."

"Roger's cousin Dick has enlisted," said Marjory. "And Roger feels dreadfully."

Roger came back just then, while the victrola struck up a sprightly march. Mr. Brook made room for him on the step beside him.

"So, I sailed for home a month earlier than I had planned," he went on. "I had to stop in New York to look after things. And I had a 'phone from Blake."

"That's Betty's father," explained Marjory to Roger.

"He'd had a letter from Archer some time ago about the trespassing going on up here." Mr. Brook had to stop to chuckle. "And also he said some one up this way had just written, wanting to rent the old lodge. Now, I was coming up here, anyway, to look after a small piece of property of mine, in which I'm much more interested than I am in shooting-lodges—"

"That's me," said Marjory, squeezing his hand.

"So the Club suggested that I take over the business, collect damages, drive out the trespassers, and rent the camp, if I found the parties wanting it quite satisfactory."

"And you did," said Marjory.

Roger ran into the camp to shut off the victrola. When he came back, Mr. Brook

was feeding Molly sugar-lumps which he had found in Marjory's pocket.

"Why, Lissy Penny," he exclaimed suddenly, "I quite forgot in my surprise to find who the trespassers were, to tell you that you are wanted at The House of the Grandmothers at once."

"Me?" cried Lissy.

"You," said Daddy.

"Not Margie, too?"

"Just you," said Daddy. "Roger'll help harness Molly, and you hop into the cart and be off double-quick. Meanwhile, I'll just help Marjory and Roger put back their furniture. Then we'll come on in the car. It's down the road a bit."

A very sober Lissy departed in the pony-cart. And in spite of having Daddy and in spite of the fact that she and Roger were putting back chairs and table and cups and

plates in their places, and even re-hanging the curtains, Marjory couldn't help remembering that while, as always, everything was coming out just right for her, Roger would have to go away, and Lissy was probably at this very minute being told that one granddaughter was enough in The House of the Grandmothers.

"If Grandma told you to tell Lissy to come home," she said at last, "I can't see why she didn't tell you where we were and about the camp and everything."

"I didn't see Grandma," said Daddy. "I thought I'd attend to business first, then go back and surprise you, Margie."

"But then, how did you know they wanted Lissy?" said Marjory.

"I had a good reason for that," said Daddy. "But it will keep till we get back to The House of the Grandmothers."

"If Lissy had come first," went on Marjory, as they re-tied the last of the red curtain bows, "do you suppose they would have liked her better?"

"Grandmothers are such queer things, Margie," was all that Daddy would say to that.

A little later, he turned the key in the lock and handed it to Marjory.

"Here is the key to your property, Miss Brook," he said. "But I shall be very particular about the payments, you know. You must do all sorts of things for me this winter."

"We'll be lost in that great house—just you and I, Daddy," said Marjory. "But it will be nice being with you again," she added, softly.

At The Pines, Roger climbed down from the car.

"I'll be over to say good-by, Margie," he said. "Sally and I leave to-morrow or the next day."

CHAPTER XVII

UNDER THE OLD WILLOW

"WHERE does he live, Margie?" asked Daddy, as the car sped along through Glenmore.

"He stays with Dick or Sally wherever they are; in Canada most of the time, I guess," said Marjory. "And you mustn't tell, Daddy, but there's something the matter with Roger. Something big that troubles him. He won't even tell me what it is. Dick doesn't want him to. Why, Daddy," she broke off suddenly, "who is that?"

They had turned into the drive of The Willows. There, down by the old tree, was Grandma Beach. She had one arm through the arm of a tall handsome man.

Her other arm was around Lissy Penny.

"It's Papa Penny!" cried Marjory. "Oh, Daddy, you brought him and left him here and that's why you knew they'd want Lissy without any one's telling you." She fairly tumbled out of the car while the words tumbled out of her mouth. At the same minute, Lissy dropped Grandma's hand, and came flying toward the car.

"Father's come!" she cried. "Grandma sent for him. And I guess they've talked everything over. Grandma's been crying. But they've made up. And she likes him. And she likes me. She kissed me when I came, Margie, and her face was all wet. I'm to stay just as long as you do, now, and always come when you do and everything. Oh, Margie, isn't it the splendidest?"

When they came up to the willow, Grandma Beach kissed Marjory—a real

story-book grandmother kiss. And she said to Papa Penny,

"It took them both to bring things out right. Margaret began it—she is so like her mother. Then Lissy came. She may be like you, Peter Penny, but she's like me, too. I was going to send her straight back to pay you off for letting Margaret come in her place. But when she stood up there, that night, and told me that the reason she hadn't wanted to come was that I didn't like you, it was exactly what I would have done myself. And I couldn't send her home. Then the longer I kept her, the longer I wanted her. I don't know what we'd ever have done without the dear child when Granny was so sick. I'm proud of both my granddaughters," she added.

Giving one of her fine strong old hands to each, Grandma Beach led the way in to sup-

per. When Marjory would have slipped into her usual place, next Grandma Beach, Grandma shook her head.

"Lissy is really the oldest granddaughter," she said; "she must sit next me. And, Celia, my son will sit at the foot of the table, please."

Marjory took Lissy's old place next Granny. And when Grandma Beach said "my son" and Papa Penny said, "Thank you, mother," it would have been hard to tell which granddaughter looked happier.

During supper, every one talked. Grandma Beach seemed to have forgotten about children being seen, not heard. They found out, then, that Grandma's letter to Peter Penny had reached him just about the time Marjory's had The Sportsman's Club. And when Peter Penny 'phoned Mr. Brook to find if he could be spared for a day or so,

Mr. Brook offered to take him along in his car.

"And, oh, Roger," said Marjory, later out under the willow, "hasn't everything come out just beau-ti-ful-ly?"

"I should think it would," said Roger, bitterly, "with such fathers and grandmothers and everything as you and Lissy Penny have."

"Don't be cross, please, to-night," pleaded Marjory.

"Margie," said Roger, soberly, "wouldn't you be cross, sometimes, if nobody anywhere really wanted you?"

"There's Dick," said Marjory.

"Dick's going to war," said Roger.

"There's Sally."

"Sally's going to send me to some kind of a school, somewhere," he said. "She told me so, to-night."

"Don't you like school?" said Marjory.

"Margie," said Roger again. He sat up and faced her squarely where she sat on her red cushion in the willow-nest. "Would you like to go to school—or—or do anything else—if all the whole time you knew that most any minute you might be blind?"

"Blind?" cried Marjory. She stared into the strange blue eyes. "Blind, Roger?"

"That's—what—makes me cross," said Roger. "I wasn't before I knew it, honest, Margie."

"Oh, Roger," cried Marjory. She slipped one comforting little hand into one of his. "Oh, why didn't you tell me before?"

"Dick wouldn't let me," said Roger, miserably. "He took me to New York early in the spring, and the doctors there said to send me into the woods and let me stay out-

doors and not draw any more or use my eyes much, and not tell folks so they'd watch me every minute—I hate being watched, Margie."

Roger paused, out of breath. Then he went on:

"By and by, maybe there'll be an operation. There would be, if Dick could see to it himself. But he'll leave it to Sally, now, and you know Sally can't see to things like that. She hasn't time. Dick said I could tell you—I wrote and asked him," he added.

Marjory didn't say a word. She was thinking. She shut her eyes to see how it would feel to be blind. But that didn't tell her. Because, of course, she knew all the time she could open them any minute, and see the trees and the river and the sunset sky.

"I was going to be an artist," said Roger.

"I wish Lissy was here," said Marjory. "She'd know just what to say."

"I don't want Lissy," said Roger. "She bustles so, she tires me. I like you best, Margie, 'cause you're always so quiet. And you don't keep asking questions and staring at a fellow and everything."

"I have, I guess," said Marjory. "But I won't any more."

"There won't be any 'any more,' " said Roger.

"May I tell Daddy, Roger?"

"Tell any one, now," said Roger. "The Grandmas know—Sally told them. And we're going away, anyway."

Sally came dashing along just then in her trim little roadster, and carried Roger off with her. Marjory sat still in the old willow. It was almost dark when Daddy came

to look for her. He sat down just where Roger had been. And Marjory told him what Roger had told her.

Daddy had already heard much of it from the Grandmas. And being Daddy, he was already thinking what could be done about it. For there must be something, he and Marjory were both sure of that.

Until the stars came out and twinkled at themselves in the water, Daddy and Marjory talked and planned. As they went in, Lissy came across the front porch to meet them.

"I think Granny's got the pearls," she whispered.

Together, the two little granddaughters went into the living-room. The lamps were lighted. A fire snapped cheerily in the fireplace. Granny sat in a little rocker. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes very

bright. On one side of her sat Aunt Eunice. Grandma and Papa Penny were on the other side.

"Granny's got something for you, dearie," she cried when she saw Marjory.

"Oh, Daddy," whispered Marjory, "make her give them to Lissy, please!"

"From what I've heard of her, Granny doesn't *make,*" he whispered back.

Granny opened the little old box. There on its faded satin, lay the gleaming pearls. She lifted them and caressed them with tender hands.

" 'Tisn't every one has two great-granddaughters," she said. "And pearls, besides. Here, Lissy, you're the oldest," she added briskly.

Lissy looked appealingly at Grandma Beach. But Grandma Beach nodded to her to go to Granny.

Granny slipped the gleaming string of pearls over the little red-brown head. They fell into place around Lissy's plump little neck.

"Thank you, Granny, dear," she said, trying to look pleased. "They are very beautiful."

She reached up to feel the pearls. To her surprise the string was close about her neck. The same minute, she saw that Granny still held a string in her hands.

"Now, Margie," she said.

Wonderingly, Marjory came across the room. Over her head Granny slipped the second string of pearls.

"Two little granddaughters," she said; "pearls enough for two and so easy to have them re-strung. Now, because Lissy is the oldest, she shall have the case."

"I'd just like to sleep with it," cried

Lissy, fairly hugging the little old box, later, as she and Marjory went to bed.

"I don't feel that I can ever sleep again in this world," cried Marjory, drinking in the beauty of the pearls as they lay in the lamplight on the old bureau.

But she did sleep all night long. Next morning she found that Daddy had had a long talk with Grandma Beach about Roger, and had already sent a telegram to Cousin Dick.

Daddy and Papa Penny were both going to stay another day.

"There are some things more important than business," said Daddy.

Late that day an answer came to Daddy's telegram. It sent Marjory scampering down the street of Glenmore to The Pines. Roger was in his hammock corner. Marjory remembered how he'd never liked noise

and never liked sun, how tired he had been the day they were lost—so many, many things. She stopped running and came to him quietly. He didn't see her till she was close to him.

"Roger," she said, "I've something splendid to tell you. Listen,—you are coming to stay with Lissy and me another whole month at The Willows. The Grandmas want you to. Then Daddy's coming for us and he's going to take you with us back to New York. And you're going to see the doctor—as many doctors as Daddy thinks best. And if they all think best, you are to have the operation. Yes, you are," she cried at the look in Roger's eyes. "Daddy's planned every single bit of it. He's telegraphed Dick, and Dick's telegraphed 'Yes.' And here is Daddy now coming up the steps to tell Sally."

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO LETTERS AND A POSTSCRIPT

IT was a day bright with November sunshine. Yellow leaves drifted down from the old willow. Some of them heaped themselves up in the empty willow-nest. Others sailed away down the river.

Two letters came together to The House of the Grandmothers. Celia read them aloud while Grandma Beach and Aunt Eunice and Granny listened.

"Dear Grandma Beach," said Lissy's letter,

"This will be a short letter because I wrote you just day before yesterday. But the splendidest thing has happened—or is going to. And don't you think that things that are going to happen are almost as nice when they're going to, as when they really happen?

"I'm going to New York to spend the winter with Doris and John. Marjory and I are going to the same school. Aunt Melissa says she can look after the little Pennys all right. And of course father and I will be home almost every Sunday to help. I'm so excited I can't write another word.

"I'm just counting the days till Christmas. It will be so lovely to see you all. Love to you and everybody. Tell Granny the little box with the pearls in it is going with me to New York.

"Your own granddaughter,

"LISSY."

Grandma Beach smiled as Celia folded Lissy's letter. "I'm very fond of Melissa," she said.

Aunt Eunice nodded and smiled. Granny nodded and smiled, too.

Celia took the other letter from its envelope. It was little and pink. It looked like Marjory. It sounded like her, too.

"Dearest Granny," it said,
"Oh, I just can't write fast enough to

tell you everything. Roger has been to the specialist—the one he saw last spring, and he says being out-doors and having good times and everything have made his eyes better already. He thinks another whole year of resting them may make them almost well. And if it doesn't, he's just sure an operation will. Isn't that wonderful? He wants to keep watch of Roger, himself, so Daddy is going to let him stay right here with me—maybe till the War is over. Roger isn't cross now—only when the pain is very bad.

"He mustn't use his eyes at all—not even to draw one picture, the doctor says. But when one pops into his head, I write down all about it in the little book Grandma gave me for my birthday. Don't tell any one, but some day I'm going to write a real book, and Roger is going to make lovely pictures for it.

"Lissy is coming to stay with John and Doris and go to school with me. We are going to tell Roger all we learn, and Doris will help him, too, so when he begins school he won't be so far behind.

"We'll all be there for Christmas. It was so nice of you to ask Roger, too. Won't we have a good time? How are Molly and Susy? Susy wrote me a letter,

and I'm going to answer it. She says Molly wants to turn in at The Willows now. She says when we come next summer, we can drive her sometimes. Roger and I are going to invite Susy to Good Times Camp.

"This is a long letter, but it hasn't said half I want to tell you. Give my love to Grandma and Aunt Eunice and Celia and Wesley.

"Your little great granddaughter,

"MARGIE."

"I'm very fond of Margaret," said Grandma, as Celia stopped reading. "And what good news of the little boy."

"There's a postscript," said Celia. She smiled as she read it.

"What do you think is going to be done with the money we made in the circus, Granny? I saw Betty Blake's mother the other day, and she told me. It is to be given to The Christmas Ship that is going to take presents to all those poor little children across the sea. Aren't you glad you took part in the circus, Granny?"

THE END

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